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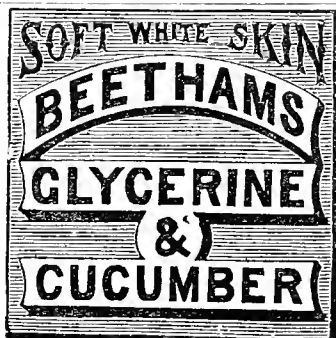
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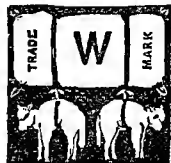
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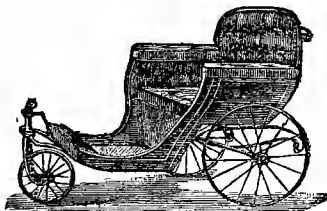
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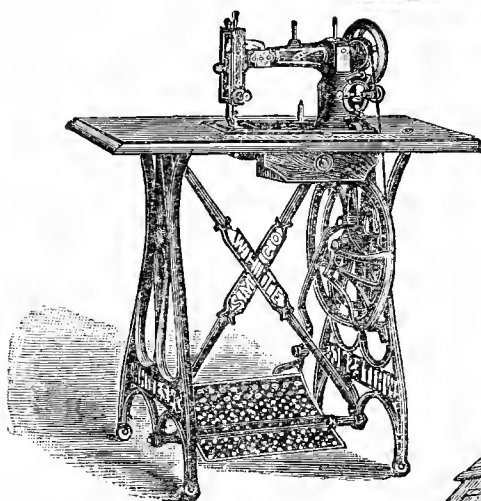
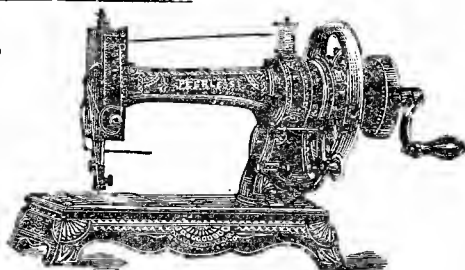


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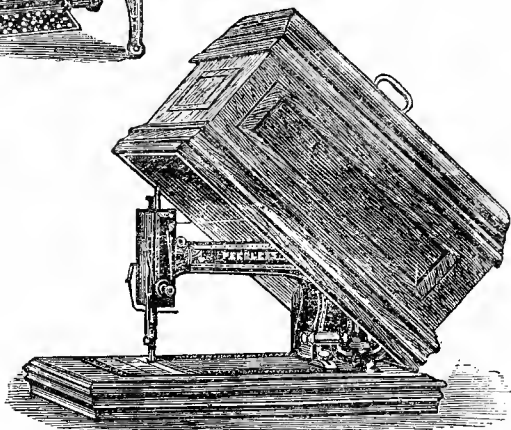
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BY

DICK DONOVAN

*Author of "Caught at Last," "The Man-Hunter,"
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London

CHATTO & WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1890

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TRACKED AND TAKEN.

A STERN CHASE.

‘A STERN chase is a long chase,’ so runs the proverb, and I once had occasion to testify in my own person to the truth of the adage, and in a somewhat remarkable manner, as I am sure the reader will admit when he has perused the following narrative.

Mr. Wilfrid Amos Orme was the managing director of a very large company, having its head-quarters in London. The ramifications of the company were as extensive as its transactions were varied. One branch of its business—and a very important branch too—was that of putting money out on mortgage. In this particular Mr. Orme was said to excel, for he brought an unusual amount of shrewdness to bear, and few men knew how to drive a better bargain. The result was that the company’s mortgaging department flourished exceedingly for many years. Mr. Orme was a highly-respected gentleman. Portly, rubicund, and jolly as to his personal appearance, with a character for *bonhomie* and a love for the fleshpots of Egypt. As a *raconteur*, he seldom met his equal, and he was one of the best diners-out in London, for he had an aldermanic capacity, a perfect digestion, a suavity of manner, a sweetness of disposition, a fund

of anecdote, a refined native wit, and the ability to make a capital after-dinner speech. No wonder, therefore, that his company was much sought after, and that that board which was graced with his presence was considered to be honoured. It seemed, indeed, as if Fortune had showered her favours upon this gentleman, for, apart from his attractive appearance and perfect health, his social position was one to be envied. He was reputed to be wealthy, and lived in one of those charming and aristocratic mansions in the Cromwell Road, near Hyde Park. He kept a retinue of servants, drove the finest turn-out to be seen in Rotten Row, and rode to hounds on a thousand guinea hunter. Besides his town house, he had a perfect little paradise of a place down in Wales, and those of his friends who received invitations to visit him there in the summer time considered themselves lucky indeed.

Mr. Orme's business transactions were not confined to the company over whose destiny he wielded such power, for he was chairman of a railway company, of two or three gold mining companies, and a member of the Stock Exchange, where—so it was said—his transactions were enormous at times. In his domestic life he seemed to be no less favoured than in his public capacity, for he had a charming wife and family. Mrs. Orme, who was said to be a member of an aristocratic family, was a singularly handsome and ladylike woman. There were three sons, all of whom were at Oxford, and four daughters, who inherited their mother's beauty and their father's placidity of temper. The head of this happy household was a liberal supporter of the church, and there were few charitable subscriptions in which his name did not

appear. Mr. Orme was said to be 'the pink of honesty and the soul of honour,' and the man who would have dared to breathe a word against his reputation might have found himself in a dangerous position. The complexities of human nature, however, have puzzled philosophers and moralists in all ages, and frequently it happens that he who is most honoured should be most shunned. If men were satisfied with a sufficiency, and craved not to accumulate hoards of wealth, there would be less crime among the better class of people. But ambition, pride, and a desire to outstrip their neighbours are responsible for the falling away from the paths of honesty of many a man.

One morning, when Mr. Wilfrid Amos Orme was in what seemed to be the very zenith of his power and popularity, he was to have attended in his capacity as chairman a very important Board meeting. Punctuality was a virtue upon which he strongly prided himself, and his colleagues, therefore, were surprised when, an hour after the appointed time, he had not put in an appearance. A telegraphic message was consequently despatched to his house, but as it brought forth no response—another extraordinary thing—a special messenger was sent to inquire if he was ill or dead. The messenger saw Mrs. Orme, who appeared to be in great distress, and she stated that her husband had been hastily summoned the night previous to Gloucestershire to attend the deathbed of his aged father, to whom he was devotedly attached. She had intended to telegraph this piece of information to the Board, but she had been so distressed herself that she had neglected to do so, and she was profuse in her apologies for the oversight.

When Mr. Orme's fellow-directors heard the news they were full of sympathy, and they proceeded to hold their meeting, although they were much inconvenienced by his absence, as he was in possession of certain business details which none of the others possessed. The directors of the company of which he was the manager were equally sympathetic, although they thought it strange that a man who was so thoroughly precise and business-like in all he did should have gone away without sending a message of some kind. When three days had passed and there was no word of the absentee, one of his colleagues—perhaps a little more suspicious than the rest—threw out a vague hint of the possibility of something being wrong.

‘Of what being wrong?’ the men asked as they held their breath, for the mere hint of such a thing against a person so highly respected as Mr. Orme seemed to be only a few degrees removed from sacrilege. The seed of suspicion, however, once dropped fructifies with amazing rapidity, and on the fourth day, those who had been the most reluctant to think evil, much less to speak it, began to whisper ominously one with the other, until the whisperings grew into loudly expressed opinions, and it was suggested that an investigation of Mr. Orme's books should take place. This suggestion, however, did not meet with unanimous support, for it was so hard to believe evil of the genial, much beloved, and philanthropic Mr. Orme. Thus another day was wasted, and then as no news of Mr. Orme could be obtained, even the most sceptical began to waver, and a meeting of the Board was hastily summoned, at which it was unanimously decided to investigate Mr. Orme's affairs so far as they

concerned the company. This decision was the death warrant of one person. That person was Mr. Orme's confidential clerk, who went home and blew out his brains. This tragic event removed the last doubt, for it was felt that nothing short of fear of exposure could have driven the unfortunate clerk to the rash act.

It will readily be supposed that to investigate even a branch of so gigantic a concern as that in which Mr. Orme had held such a responsible position was an affair of no small moment, and several days elapsed before the accountants and others engaged were enabled to say definitely that a system of gigantic frauds had been carried on for a period of several years, and involved a loss to the company of something like one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. These frauds, which had been committed no doubt with the aid of the confidential clerk, were of a most ingenious character, and consisted for the most part of bogus mortgages and the purchase of property that existed only on paper.

As the investigation proceeded it became evident that a third person must have been mixed up in the transaction, and that person a lawyer. At once suspicion fell upon a solicitor who had been engaged, in the face of considerable opposition, by Mr. Orme some ten years before. This man's name was Llewellyn Jarvis, but when inquiries were made it was found that he too had decamped, though it was clear he had only gone when he heard that an investigation had been decided upon. Jarvis's escutcheon had not been altogether unstained, for at one period of his career he had been prosecuted for fraudulently misappropriating moneys entrusted to him by clients for in-

vestment. The prosecution, however, failed to prove its case owing to the want of evidence, and Mr. Jarvis was discharged, though a good deal of odium clung to him; and it was a knowledge of this matter that induced Mr. Orme's colleagues to oppose Jarvis's engagement; that opposition would undoubtedly have been successful had Mr. Orme been less trusted and less influential.

Men stood aghast now when they found out how thoroughly they had been deceived in their idol, and of what common clay he was made. Nevertheless there was wide-spread sympathy for his unfortunate family. There was no doubt Mrs. Orme had been aware of her husband's frauds, or at any rate she knew perfectly well of his flight, for the story about the dying father was found to be false. But still people sympathised with her, for it was felt, or at all events believed, that she was an innocent victim, and her endeavour to save her husband by a falsehood was only what ninety-nine women out of every hundred would have done who loved their husbands.

As soon as the frauds were known I received instruction to hunt for the culprit, and to spare neither expense nor trouble in my endeavours to capture him; for, wealthy as the company was supposed to be, the loss was so heavy as to threaten it with bankruptcy, and it was hoped that if the criminal was captured he might be made to disgorge some of his ill-gotten wealth. It was found that the valuable freehold of his house belonged to his wife, and that the equally valuable furniture, plate, paintings, carriages, and horses were settled upon her, and therefore could not be touched, and the only hope was in securing him and making him give back that which he had stolen.

His house in Wales was only a short leasehold, and on the handsome and costly furniture it contained there was a bill of sale. The solicitor, Llewellen Jarvis, was captured in a few days in the house of a relative in Southampton. He had delayed his departure too long, and the telegraph had set the police throughout the country on his track, so that he was speedily unearthed, and it was then found he had taken his passage in one of the West India boats for the River Plate, but had allowed the steamer to go without him, for he had learned by the papers how closely every port was watched, and that his capture was certain if he ventured to go on board. His capture was no less certain by his remaining; it was only delayed a little with the death of the confidential clerk. By the arrest of the solicitor the lines of pursuit were narrowed, and attention could now be directed solely to the principal. As the investigation of affairs proceeded people learned the cause that determined his flight; and that cause was the all but unanimous resolve of the company's directors to make a very radical change in their system of effecting mortgages, and that change must have inevitably disclosed the frauds. The crisis, therefore, had been precipitated, but the arch rogue had taken time by the forelock, and had escaped before discovery.

As I entered upon my duties I could not close my eyes to the fact that it was neither an ordinary case nor an ordinary criminal I had to deal with. He was an educated and exceedingly clever man, and so little likely to arouse the suspicion of those with whom he mixed, that his escape was thereby rendered the easier. His wife, for whom I was deeply sorry, for she was such an amiable, gentle, beautiful lady, vowed

that she did not know of his whereabouts; and she declared that the contents of the house and the freehold were all she possessed for the support of herself and children.

So far then I got no clue from Mrs. Orme, and I had to seek elsewhere. I ascertained that on the very day of the criminal's disappearance a steamer had sailed for New York from Liverpool; and amongst the passengers who had booked a passage and sailed in her was a 'Rev. Launcelot Gibbons.' As I could not find this gentleman's name in the clergy list, I came to the conclusion that he was none other than the man whose acquaintance I was so anxious to make, and a description of Mr. Gibbons tallied so accurately with that of Mr. Orme as to leave no room to doubt that they were one and the same person.

Unfortunately the Atlantic telegraph cables had not then brought England and America within speaking distance, and in view of the long start my man had got, the strong probabilities were that he would succeed in baffling pursuit for some time, even if he had not escaped beyond the fear of capture.

Mr. Jarvis, who had undergone a preliminary examination before the magistrates and been remanded, swore that he had been drawn into his wrongdoing by Orme, and that he had profited comparatively little, for all that had come to his net had been the trifling sum of twenty thousand pounds or thereabouts, and nearly the whole of that sum he had lost on the turf. He further declared that he had not the least idea that his chief was meditating flight, for he had said nothing to him about it, and he was no less ignorant as to where he had gone to. It was evident that this man, as well as the wretched fellow who had

shot himself, had been simply tools of the cleverer rogue, though, of course, they were equally amenable to the law. But as one had chosen to submit himself to the supreme tribunal of us all rather than to his fellow man's, and as the one who was in custody was a man of straw from whom nothing tangible could be obtained, our energies were naturally turned to the endeavour to capture the big fish. Therefore, having provided myself with sworn affidavits, and all the necessary papers for his extradition in case I should come up with him on American soil, I took my passage in a New York steamer and started in pursuit.

As the steamer I was in sailed down the Mersey and out to the steel blue waters of the stormy Atlantic, I could not suppress a feeling that the chase was certainly likely to be a long one, if Mr. Orme was as clever as he was reputed to be, and it might even end in my failure altogether, and that distressed me more than anything else. I could not bear the idea of failure in anything I undertook. Of course I had not always been successful; what man is? But my failures had been so few, comparatively speaking, that I had earned the proud position of being considered the most certain man in my profession. I should like to say here, and I think I am justified in so saying, that I attribute my success to the fact that I never failed to value the most insignificant detail of any case in which I was engaged. And my readers are aware that I have persistently urged the importance of a detective remembering that what seems the most improbable may, on being sifted, turn out to be the most probable; and unless a detective recognises this he will as frequently as not fail to get the all essential clues that would lead him to his quarry. It cannot

be denied, except by those who know nothing at all about it, that criminal-hunting is a science, and is governed by certain fixed rules and laws, as all sciences are; and unless these rules and laws are closely studied no man calling himself a detective can hope to attain to even a passing efficiency in his work. Zeal is all very well, but unless it is accompanied by cool-headed calculation it is useless.

I have been led into these remarks by vividly recalling my feelings and impressions on the particular occasion I am dealing with. I remember it was in the stormy autumn time, and not only was the Atlantic roaring with a thunderous roar, but the sky was one unbroken arch of sepia darkness. And as I gazed across the indigo sea to the dark horizon, I began to think it typified the inscrutable veil Mr. Orme had placed between himself and those who were so anxious to meet him.

Beaten out of her course by powerful gales and heavy seas, the steamer I was in made an extraordinary long passage, a day and a half being wasted on the banks of Newfoundland owing to a fog of remarkable density. All things come to an end, however, and so did this tedious and trying voyage. We sighted the 'Never Sink 'Ems' and the 'Fire Islands,' and then steamed up the East River, and very soon—much to my intense relief—we were moored alongside our berth. I lost no time in getting ashore, but I am bound to say I had not much hope of capturing my man. He had got too much start, and I could not imagine him being such a fool as to remain in New York, for he would know very well that the hue and cry when once raised would be very hot, and he could hardly imagine that his assumption of the character of a clergyman

was a perfect safeguard against his being traced. At any rate, if he did he was unworthy of all that had been said about his shrewdness and his cleverness. I did not know the man personally, but I carried his photograph, and his mental and physical peculiarities had been minutely described to me.

The photograph in my possession represented a most philanthropic looking gentleman, with a keen grey eye, silvery hair, and greyish whiskers and moustache, with a benevolent and frank expression that was quite fascinating. It would be a curious and interesting psychological study to try and determine in what way this expression belied his true character. For benevolent he certainly was, and although he had given much ostentatiously he had, as I had learned, done many good deeds which the public knew not of; and various anecdotes told about him proved that he was a most kindly man, affable, polite, and deferential to his inferiors, with a heart that melted to charity; and he was never known to turn a deaf ear to any tale of wrong or woe. And yet in spite of this and his seeming frankness he had for years been committing frauds of a gigantic character, and living upon money thus dishonestly gained. These inconsistencies were glaring, and he was a striking contradiction in terms. It was another pitiable illustration too, that pride of birth, good social status, luxurious surroundings, the love of wife and children, and the respect and honour of others, are not sufficient, under given conditions, to keep a man from swerving from rectitude, and sinking to the depths of the poorest and most ignorant criminal. It is pitiable to have to admit this truism, but alas it is true, and serves to show how inherently weak we all are!

There is an old Greek proverb which says ‘See that thou do it not,’ meaning that you must be careful not to fall into the sin you are condemning in others, ‘for, as the proverb goes on, ‘Fate is common and the Future is hidden.’ Good old Archbishop Fenelon used to say with a sigh, whenever he heard of a criminal going to execution, ‘Ah, alack, there goes my unfortunate self.’ While sorrowfully pondering, therefore, over the vexing problems human nature presents us with, let us not in our haste to condemn others forget our own shortcomings. Nor should he who doeth wrong forget the warning of the moralist— ‘For every ounce of pleasure a pound of pain. For every drop of milk a sea of fire. The comedy is short, but the tragedy is long. Iniquity soon plays its part, and then Vengeance leaps on the stage.’ It would be well indeed if these weighty and warning sentences were engraved in huge characters on the wall of every school where the young are taught, so that, by constantly being before the eyes, they might make such an impression as never to be forgotten, and in after life, when the feet would stray and the heart tend to harden itself against truth and virtue, the remembered warning might act as a deterrent.

I am afraid I have been led into moralising in this paper at an undue length, but a consideration of Mr. Orme’s case must necessarily set a man moralising if he is not altogether indifferent to his kind, and is able to shed a tear for the sufferings of the wrong-doers’ victims. Mr. Orme had brought ruin and disgrace upon his wife and children; his comedy had been short, and the first act of the tragedy had commenced in the sad suicide of his confidential clerk, who had thus brought weeping and woe to his own family and

relations, while vengeance was on the track of Orme himself, who must sooner or later be taken, or live the rest of his days as a hunted animal.

Pursuing my inquiries in New York, I found that the 'Rev. Launcelot Gibbons' had proceeded from the steamer that brought him over to the Fifth Avenue Hotel, a gigantic house (since burnt down and rebuilt), where it was not an easy matter, and in fact no attempt was made, to keep even a passing record of the hundreds of people who were constantly coming and going. And what seemed like a stumbling block to me at first was that, though I traced my gentleman from the steamer to the hotel, and found out the cab-driver who drove him there, no such name as the 'Rev. Launcelot Gibbons' appeared in the books of the hotel. But I soon came to the conclusion that the pseudo clergyman had dropped his clerical character on arriving at the hotel, the better to put his followers off the scent. And, on exhibiting the photograph I carried to the book-keepers and some of the waiters, they at once recognised it as a gentleman who gave the name of Henry George Priestly, from Bradford, Yorkshire, England. He had stayed in the hotel for a week, and then had left, but where he had gone to nobody seemed to know.

If it had been my nature to feel beaten at the first repulse, I should certainly have come to the conclusion that Mr. Orme had fairly baffled me, and had cunningly and artfully contrived to entirely destroy his tracks, and thus throw the pursuer off the scent. But I had no such feeling. It is true I was baffled for the time, but that only served to arouse all my energies, and put me on my mettle. I thought of the possibilities of Mr. Orme lying *perdu* in the great city

of New York; but I dismissed that thought very soon, as the probabilities would not work out. He had already showed superior cunning, and knowing as he would know that as soon as the news of his defalcations reached New York, all the police and detectives of that city would be on the alert, he was hardly the man to risk capture by remaining there; for big and populous as the place was, he had too conspicuous a personality to entirely escape the scrutiny of the Argus eyes that would be everywhere prying for him. No, what he had done, I felt sure, was to place distance between him and New York. But where had he gone to? That was the question I had to answer, the problem I had to solve, and I answered it and solved it by a strange chance.

It occurred to me that I might possibly learn some interesting particulars about Mr. Orme if I could obtain interviews with a few of the first-class passengers who had come out in the same steamer, and I at once set to work to try and find out the whereabouts of any who might be near. In this I was so far successful as to hear of a Mr. Spearman, a jeweller in a very large way of business in Boston. He had been making a tour in Europe with his daughter, and a feeling that I could not account for by any ordinary process of reasoning impressed me that this gentleman might be able to tell me something about the 'Rev. Launcelot Gibbons.' It must not be forgotten that Mr. Orme was a striking personage; and I had learned enough of his habits and peculiarities to be assured that he would not hide his light under a bushel, especially in his assumed character of a clergyman. I therefore took train to Boston, and waited upon Mr. Spearman.

I found him an exceedingly intelligent and affable gentleman, with whom one at once felt at home.

‘My object in calling upon you, sir,’ I began, ‘is to inquire if your attention was in any way directed to a ‘Rev. Launcelot Gibbons,’ who was a fellow-passenger with you from Liverpool to New York?’

Mr. Spearman smiled genially as he made answer—

‘Oh, yes. One could hardly help being attracted to him. He happened to be the only clergyman on board, and besides officiating as a clergyman, he made himself singularly agreeable to everyone.’

I smiled now as I heard how the clever rascal had gulled his fellow-passengers, and had had the consummate audacity to play the rôle of clergyman to the letter.

‘I suppose you do not happen to know what has become of him?’ I asked, not without some misgiving and anxiety, though I assumed a nonchalant air.

‘Well, I had some little business transactions with him after we landed.’

‘Indeed!’

Perhaps there was something in the way I uttered this exclamation that struck Mr. Spearman, for he looked at me hard and asked pointedly—

‘But tell me, sir, why do you make these inquiries?’

‘You have a right to know, and I will tell you,’ I answered. The Rev. Launcelot Gibbons is not a clergyman at all, but a Mr. Orme, who is wanted in London for gigantic frauds.’

It almost seemed as if Mr. Spearman would have fallen to the ground with astonishment as I made this announcement. His whole expression changed, and his mild eyes flashed up with the fire of wrath.

‘Sir,’ he said angrily, ‘are you perfectly warranted

in making this charge against the Rev. — —against Mr. Orme, I think you said was his name?’

‘Perfectly warranted,’ I answered. ‘I am a detective, and have voyaged from England specially to effect his arrest, and for that purpose I hold a warrant.’

‘Well, upon my word,’ exclaimed the jeweller. ‘Who could possibly have thought it? Even now I fancy there must be some mistake.’

‘Oh, no, sir; there is no mistake,’ I answered.

‘Well, I never was more deceived in my life. Really there is no trusting anyone, and it serves to show how careful we should be in forming promiscuous acquaintances. Dear, dear me, how shocked my daughter will be to be sure.’

‘You spoke, I think, of some business transactions?’ I ventured to remind him, as he seemed inclined to become reflective and to moralise, and I was burning with eagerness to get on the trail of my man.

‘Oh, yes. He learned that I resided in Boston, and so he asked me for my address, as he told me he was intending to visit Boston. Of course, I gave it to him, and a day or two after I returned home he called upon me, and I and my family entertained him. He informed us that he was going out west, to Nevada—I think he said—to see a brother, who was a farmer. The brother had been a scapegrace, and had come to America some years ago, and subsequently had taken to farming, but was not doing well, and was in monetary difficulties. Mr. Orme was therefore anxious to give him some money, but did not find it convenient to do so unless he could dispose of some diamond jewellery he had with him, and he asked me to buy it.’

‘Did that not strike you as a strange request for a clergyman to make?’

‘No. I can’t say that it did. The desire to help his brother seemed to me perfectly natural.’

‘No doubt. And so you bought the jewellery?’

‘I did. It consisted of four sets of exceedingly valuable shirt studs, two diamond collar studs, diamond sleeve links, and several diamond rings. Altogether I paid him 4000 dollars.’

‘You have no means of knowing if he went to Nevada, or if he really went west at all?’ I asked.

‘No. He promised to write to me, for I and my family were so impressed with him that we cordially invited him to stay with us for some time on his way back.’

‘Of course you haven’t heard from him yet?’ I asked, a little ironically.

‘No.’

‘Do you expect to do so?’

‘Well, no; not after what you have told me, if that is correct.’

‘Of its correctness you need entertain no doubt,’ I answered, and to doubly assure him I showed him a photograph of Orme, which he instantly recognised, and I also showed him the warrant for his arrest.’

As I left Mr. Spearman I pondered upon what he had told me, and worked the thing out logically in my own mind, with the result that I came to the following conclusions.

Mr. Orme had no intention originally of going to Boston. Why should he? Boston is to the north of New York, and on the sea coast, and a place where he would be even more liable to arrest than in New York. But when he found out that Mr. Spearman was a jeweller and dealer in precious stones, he thought it a splendid opportunity to dispose of his

superfluous jewellery, especially if he was going west, and selling the jewellery seemed to me to be evidence in favour of his having gone west, where, owing to the comparative wildness of the country, diamonds would be mere lumber, and a man wearing them would run the risk of being murdered by the lawless desperadoes who live by plundering. The exceedingly plausible and ingenious story Orme told to Mr. Spearman as an excuse for his selling the jewellery, showed his cleverness, for it was calculated not only to attract sympathy, but to disarm suspicion, if any had existed in the jeweller's mind. But there were other reasons why I thought it highly probable he had gone to Nevada. The first of these was that having no shadow of an idea that his pursuers would come to know of his transactions with the jeweller, he was exceedingly likely to have mentioned to Mr. Spearman what his real destination was, because, having no fear, he would not consider it necessary to exercise caution. The second reason I had for thinking he had gone was that Nevada was within easy distance of the Rocky Mountains to the east and of San Francisco to the west. Now, if he should find that he was being pressed too hotly by the pursuers he could retreat to the Rockies on the one hand, and in some of the wild and all but inaccessible spots that abound there he might lie concealed, and defy his would-be captors to find him. On the other hand, he could easily and quickly reach San Francisco, where he could get a steamer for some of the South Sea Islands, Japan, China, Australia, New Zealand, India. In such a case it would not matter to him where he went to. Steamers were leaving daily for the places named, and he would take the first that was going. I could not

help thinking that I was correct in my surmises ; for such a clever man as Orme must have worked out, as a problem, all the chances that were for and against him ; and he would have been singularly obtuse had he failed to see the advantage he would have by locating himself midway between the Pacific and the Rockies, and that would be his position in Nevada. Moreover, this State was a wild and sparsely-populated one, and by adapting himself to the style of the country, as I was sure he would—that is, he would assume the character of a squatter, a gold digger, a teamster, or even a loafer—he might reduce detection and capture to a minimum.

Arguing thus with myself I decided that it was my duty to go to Nevada, having first of all used every means to discover if he had gone elsewhere. I did not shut my eyes, of course, to the fact that Nevada was an extensive region, and that to search for a man there without a well-defined trail was not unlike the task of looking for a needle in a truss of hay. But still, priding myself, as I did, on being able by some peculiar natural aptitude to scent a criminal from afar if I could only get within reasonable distance of him, I thought if he was in Nevada and I was there too I should somehow or other nose him out.

I ascertained that when Orme was in Boston he stayed at the Great Britain Hotel, and that being only a small hotel, it was remembered that a Rev. Launcelot Gibbons had had his baggage sent through to New York. As he had stayed in New York under the name of Henry George Priestly, it was obvious that he had assumed the clerical roll again in Boston in order to deceive the jeweller, and this again favoured my theory that he had not originally contemplated

going to Boston, and his going there was due to his chance acquaintance with Mr. Spearman. I could not at first suggest to myself a reasonable theory for his returning to New York, as he could have gone west from Boston quite as well, until suddenly it occurred to me that he went there to get letters, and so, as soon as I arrived, I went to the Post Office and inquired if letters had been addressed there to the Rev. Launcelot Gibbons, and I was informed that a number had been delivered to that gentleman some time ago, and since then others had been re-addressed to him to the Post Office, Great Salt Lake City. This was somewhat in the nature of a revelation, though it confirmed the correctness of my theory about his having tracked west. But why on earth had he gone to the Great Salt Lake City? That somewhat puzzled me. Surely he had no intention of settling amongst the Mormons. And yet, on second thoughts, it seemed probable that he might have such intention. For a man who declared his readiness to embrace the Mormon faith might have found a safe refuge in the city by the Salt Lake.

Within twenty-four hours, therefore, of this discovery I was on my way west. It is true I was a long way astern of the man I was pursuing, but I had every reason to believe I was full in his wake, and as a stern chaser must go faster than the one that is chased if he would gain his object, I resolved to lose no time on the road, strong as the temptation was to linger in the grand country through which my route ran.

It is difficult now at this period, when so many years lie between me and that exciting chase, to keep my pen from slipping into a description of that wonderful journey, in spite of its having been written over and

over again. The impression made by the magnificence of the Rocky Mountains lingers with me yet, for though I was man-hunting I yet had an eye for the grandeur of Nature, and a soul to appreciate it. I must content myself, however, with saying that I travelled night and day until I found myself in Salt Lake City, but it was only to learn with chagrin that the man I wanted had been and gone, and had left no address behind him. This proved then that I was wrong in supposing that it had been Orme's intention to settle amongst the Mormons. It seemed that he had gone to Salt Lake simply as a sightseer; and though his letters had been addressed to the Post Office in the name of Launcelot Gibbons, he dropped the clerical character, and gave those with whom he came in contact to understand that he was a private gentleman travelling for distraction, as he had recently lost a much-beloved wife. Here again he showed his cleverness in adapting himself to the circumstances of the hour. Such a tale as that in the Mormon city would ensure him attention, for it would be supposed that as a widower, mourning for a dead wife, he would be susceptible to influences that might secure him as a convert; and a natural inference to be drawn by those who might have the desire to convert him would be that he was wealthy, and money was a powerful factor in the Mormons' calculations. If they had any such views, however, Mr. Orme had disappointed them, and he had gone off leaving no trail behind. I was not disconsolate, for somehow I could not shake off a feeling that I should pick his trail up again. I was still astern, but by-and-by I would overhaul him. That seemed to impress me like a conviction.

Singularly enough while I was still resting in Salt

Lake City, and a little undecided what course to take, news came in that an Englishman, believed to be a Mr. Priestly from Bradford, in Yorkshire, had been attacked by coach robbers near Lake Walker, in Nevada. I ascertained that Lake Walker was a lonely spot under the shadow of the Sierra Nevada Mountains, and almost in a straight line as the crow flies from San Francisco, from which it was distant exactly two hundred miles, but the great barrier of the Sierra intervenes between the two places. From Salt Lake City it was about three hundred miles, and the only means of reaching it other than by tramping was on horseback. My mind was instantly made up. I was told that the road bristled with dangers, not the least of them being predatory bands of Indians and reckless desperadoes of various nationalities, who lived by plundering, and who set no more value upon human life than they did on a pin.

‘You are sure to be either bowie-knifed or plugged with bullets,’ remarked one smirk-faced Job’s comforter to me, but I thought to myself that bowie-knifing or plugging with bullets was a game that any one might play at who had ordinary nerve and pluck. And so providing myself with the necessary tools for the game in the shape of a very formidable bowie and two first-class revolvers, in addition to a thoroughly sound and hardy prairie horse, I started on my long ride. Besides what I have enumerated I had furnished myself with a very light portable tent and a waterproof sheet and a blanket, and a bag of dried provisions; so that I was prepared for any emergency.

That the dangers I had been warned against did exist there was no reason to doubt, but I believe they were much exaggerated, though my journey was not

to be accomplished without a somewhat exciting adventure. On one part of the route I was overtaken by a tremendous thunderstorm such as are common in those regions at certain seasons. The rain came down as if a second deluge had commenced, and in a very few minutes I was saturated, while my horse became restive and nervous, as the lightning flashed incessantly, and the thunder roared like a dozen big batteries all firing at once. I looked anxiously about for a place of shelter, and espied about half a mile away a farmhouse perched beneath a mass of rock. Urging my horse to its best speed I gained the house, and the people instantly extended their hospitality to me and my beast. I found that I was not the only storm-driven traveller there, for two men had arrived a little while before. They were wild but picturesque-looking fellows, armed to the teeth, and dressed in red shirts, loose pants, and long boots, into which their pants were tucked. Their large Sombrero hats, from which the rain was dripping, were hanging on pegs at the door, and the fellows were kicking their spurred heels in the porch, while their mustangs were hitched to posts beneath a long wooden shed.

These men gave me travellers' greeting as I entered, and I fancy they eyed me askance. Presently they became very inquisitive about my nationality, where I had come from, what I was doing, and where I was going to. To none of these questions did I give any direct answer. I remained a mystery to them, and it seemed to me that their dark eyes flashed (they were half-breed Mexicans) and their swarthy faces flushed, with anger or wounded pride. However, we exchanged cigars, and they gave me a good deal of information about the country. Before the storm had

quite finished these gentlemen took their departure, and were soon lost in the haze that floated up from the hot sand after the rain.

‘Who are those men?’ I asked of my host.

‘Loafers and desperadoes,’ was the answer. ‘We have to be civil to those sort of gentry, but I should be sorry to trust myself with them if I had anything about me worth stealing. Fortunately for you, they have taken the opposite road to that you are travelling.’

I did not feel sorry that they had, and after warmly thanking my host for the shelter and hospitality, I continued on my way. About an hour later I noted two horsemen, drawn up beneath a clump of trees, a little ahead of my route. It was a wild and solitary region, and at first I was glad at the idea of meeting fellow-travellers; but the second glance showed me that they were the desperadoes I had seen at the farm. I guessed in an instant that they meant mischief, and had made a detour to intercept me. Thinking that under the circumstances discretion was the better part of valour, I turned my horse’s head to the plain, and let him go, and he went like a whirlwind, but after me came the ruffians, and preceding them were bullets that whizzed unpleasantly near my head. Rising in my saddle, I turned, took aim, and fired, and I saw one fellow throw up his arms and sink to the ground, and his companion stopped to assist him. This check to them enabled me to escape, and I never heard whether the man was killed or only wounded. I barely expected to accomplish so much when I fired, for I did not profess to be a crack shot by any means, and luck favoured me.

Without further adventure, I reached Lake Walker,

as wild and desolate a region as can well be imagined, but there is a little traffic going on, as it is on the road to one of the passes that cross the Sierra Nevada. There is a small posthouse, and here I heard of Orme. He had been severely injured, and had been borne in an improvised litter on the back of a mule over the mountains to San Francisco. I was still astern therefore; and only waiting long enough to recruit myself and animal, I resumed my journey. On reaching Sacramento, I sold the wiry little mustang that had carried me so well, and got the coach into 'Frisco. But, alas! it was only to learn that I was again too late. Orme *alias* Priestly, having recovered, or partially so, from his injuries, had taken passage in a steamer for Melbourne. It was a bitter disappointment to me after following the fugitive all across the great American Continent. But I was determined to make another effort to come up with him, and secured a berth in the next steamer for Australia.

Briefly, I made a good voyage, and punctual to time reached Melbourne; and before I had been in the city two days I discovered that at last I had overtaken my man. He was living under the assumed name of Carter in a private house at St. Kilda, one of the most beautiful suburbs of Melbourne. Of course, I at once placed myself in communication with the police authorities, and, proceeding with half-a-dozen men to Orme's residence, I found him seated in an exquisite garden. Tapping him on the shoulder, I showed him my warrant, and told him he was my prisoner.

'I have followed you all across America and the Pacific, Mr. Orme,' I said, 'and now I do not intend to lose sight of you again until we reach England.'

He was deadly pale, and showed some traces of nervousness.

‘You have fairly hunted me down,’ he said sadly, ‘and the bold and tireless hunter deserves his prey. You have secured me, and my race is run.’

He was duly lodged in prison, and a fortnight later we both sailed in Money Wigram’s magnificent sailing ship *Superb* for London, round the Horn. Mr. Orme’s spirits had quite deserted him, and he became very dejected. I put him upon his word of honour—though no doubt some people will say that was not worth much—that he would not do anything rash, and while exercising a certain amount of vigilance I tried not to make it irksome to him, and he enjoyed the liberty of the ship. We made a splendid run down to Cape Horn, where we fell in with terrific weather. And one hideous night when all the elements seemed to be at strife Orme disappeared. Nobody saw him go; nobody knew how he went. But there is little doubt the burden of his shame and remorse for his crime were too much for him, and he went to his death in that howling waste of waters.

Reader, will you think me weak when I say that I wept when I heard of his sad end? A pitiable end indeed for one so gifted, and for a life that had been so brilliant. I was there in the position of an instrument of the stern and outraged law, but I had a man’s heart to feel for the weakness of poor humanity, and I truly pitied Orme, and had tears and sympathy for his wife and children. He had done some good deeds in his time, and I breathed a silent prayer that they might weigh well in his favour when the balance was cast.

Truly, ‘Fate is common and the future is hidden.’

Orme had made his fate and he saw not the dark future that awaited him. Iniquity had played her part, and vengeance had leapt on the stage—the vengeance of conscience and remorse that smote him to his death with a whip of scorpions.

Conscience had been lashing him before I overtook him in Melbourne, for as I learned, on my arrival in England, he had previously written to a relative giving him a power of attorney, and instructing him to realise all his estate, and, after making provision for his wife and family, to refund as much money as possible to the company he had defrauded. The result was that nearly fifty thousand pounds was paid back.

His suicide was a terrible blow to his wife and children, and even men whom he had wronged pitied him. And I mentally exclaimed out of the charity of my heart—*Vade in pace.*

A TERRIBLE DEED.

ONE morning in the early summer a farm labourer employed on a farm not far from Strathaven was crossing a field belonging to his employer, in which were a number of stacks of hay, when he was horrified to observe the dead body of a woman lying behind one of the stacks. He knew at the first glance that she was dead, because her eyes were fixed and glassy; her face was like marble, and puckered up into an expression of agony; the lips were parted, revealing the teeth and the tip of the tongue, which had been bitten through. The front part of her dress was also covered with clotted blood. She was lying on her back, one leg drawn up, her arms outstretched, and the hands clenched.

The man immediately ran back to the farm and stated what he had seen. Then some of the men said that they thought they had heard a woman's screams two or three times in the dead of night, but not feeling sure that the sounds were really the screams of a woman, they had gone to sleep again without making any attempt to find out if anything was wrong. The farmer, Mr. George Duncan, who was an exceedingly intelligent man, at once noted down all the details about the body which I have mentioned. Then he had the dead woman covered over with a tarpaulin

without disturbing her position in the least, and information was despatched post-haste to Glasgow. I was at once requested to proceed to the spot, and make every investigation necessary, and within half-an-hour of getting my orders I was driving to Strathaven in company with our police surgeon. On arriving at Mr. Duncan's farm, another medical man was summoned from Strathaven, and as soon as he came we proceeded to make an official examination. That made by the doctors was at first only cursory, and was more to enable them to ascertain the cause of the woman's death. They were then in a position to say that the poor creature's throat bore marks of strangulation; but there was one or more punctured wounds in the breast, and it was impossible to state then whether death had actually resulted from strangulation or stabbing. But one thing they were positive about, the woman had not met her death by her own hands, but at the hands of some one else. I thereupon proceeded to make a drawing of the position of the body and its surroundings. That done, my next step was to critically examine the ground near where the body was lying. First, let me say that Duncan's farm was situated in a lonely position. It stood back from the main road about a quarter of a mile, and was reached by a private lane. The field where the body was found was a narrow strip, running from the house to some ploughed land. It was used principally for stacking hay and straw. There were twelve stacks altogether, and they stood in two parallel rows. In one corner of the field nearest the house was a drinking pond for cattle. The bothy used by the farm hands abutted on the field, and screams proceeding from any part of the field could have been heard in

the bothy. Therefore, the men were no doubt right when they said they heard screams. The field was parallel with the lane, from which it was separated by a thickset hedge. Access to the field was gained by means of a gateway leading out of the farmyard, so that anyone wanting to get in must either force a way through the hedge or go through the farmyard and enter by the gateway. All these particulars I noted, and, of course, set my value upon them. The ground about the body was soft—that is, without being absolutely muddy, it was soft enough to retain the impressions of footsteps, and my examination led me to determine that the ground had been tramped upon by two persons, and there was unmistakable evidence that there had been a struggle. There was one patch where the footsteps were jumbled together upon the ground; that patch was sloppy owing to the tramping, which had squeezed the water out of the spongy ground. Then there was another point my examination enabled me to determine. After the victim had fallen on her back the criminal had knelt over her, not on her but straddle-legged across her, and in this position probably had rendered her partially insensible, and had then stabbed her. I arrived at this conclusion by, to my mind, irrefutable evidence, and that evidence was that on each side of the body were knee prints. Having established this point, my next care was to critically examine the footmarks, and I settled that there had only been two persons present, the victim and the slayer. One set of footmarks were clearly those of the dead woman, as proved by her boots. The others were smaller, and were made not by a man's boots but *a woman's*. Here then was a startling problem to solve. Was the murderer a

woman, or a man wearing woman's boots? If the latter, he must have been a very small man, or at any rate have had extraordinarily small feet. But the more I pursued my investigation the more I inclined to the belief that the murderer was a woman, and at last I got a piece of evidence which convinced me that I was right. I found tramped into the mud close by the head of the body part of an earring of a somewhat novel pattern. It was a tiny ball of hollow gold. On each side of the ball a very small garnet was set. The hook that held the ball in the ear had been broken off. 'This ring,' I thought to myself, 'belonged to the person who did the murder, and that person was a woman.' The dead woman's ears were not bored for earrings. The portion I had found had probably been wrenched out during the struggle. I next directed my attention to determining how the murderer had left the field; and here the footsteps helped me. They were clearly traceable towards the hedge and the bottom of the field. They were, however, lost after four or five yards, owing to the ground hardening. But they directed me to a gap in the hedge farthest from the house. It was not a big gap, but large enough for a medium size person to squeeze through, and when I came to examine it I found a morsel of grey woollen cloth adhering to the thorny hedge. 'A woman has passed through here,' I said, 'and in doing so has left a piece of her dress behind.' That piece of dress and the broken earring I jealously secured, for I knew how valuable they might prove as clues. My investigation being completed so far, the victim's body was conveyed to Strathaven, where the doctors began their part of the business. The dead woman was good looking—decidedly so. She had fair,

wavy hair; blue eyes and good teeth, with a plump, well-rounded figure; her clothes indicated a person in a humble position in life, not the humblest, but she might have belonged to any class from a tradesman's wife to a pedlar. She had on a good dress, but it did not correspond with the piece of cloth I had got from the hedge. She also wore good boots and stockings, but her underclothing was coarse, and some of it much mended and patched. Robbery had not been the motive of the crime, because in her pocket was an old leather purse containing a sovereign, a one pound note, three shillings, and half a crown, with a few copper pieces. On her wedding finger she wore a wedding ring, and another ring of some value, being set with pearls and rubies. There was not a scrap of written paper on her person that would have tended to establish her identity, nor was her linen marked with any name or initials. But round her shoulders, under the dress, she wore a cream-coloured handkerchief, made partly of silk and partly of cotton. I believe the manufacture of this sort of handkerchiefs is or was peculiar to Lancashire and Yorkshire. They are usually sold for gentlemen's mufflers. The one round the woman's neck bore in one corner the initials R. A. I need scarcely say I took possession of that handkerchief as being calculated to afford me another clue. These letters, of course, would have stood for the initials of scores of names; but, nevertheless, I knew what value to attach to this small link, and I was hopeful that it might help, at any rate, to put me on the track of the criminal.

And now I come to the medical aspects of the case; and they have such an important bearing that I must detail them. I have already mentioned that

there were marks on the neck, which showed the victim had been partially strangled; and the deducement to be drawn from this was that there had been a struggle between the criminal and the intended victim, who had been overcome by the throat being compressed, but, as was subsequently proved, that was not the immediate cause of death. The victim was a somewhat small woman, and from the smallness of her bones and the softness of the muscles, she could not have been possessed of any great deal of strength, and so would have been easily overcome by the pressure on the throat. But she had also been stabbed twice in the breast—once to the right of the sternum, not a very deep puncture, though it would have proved a dangerous one had she not been killed outright. The second blow had been delivered with great force over the heart. In putting his finger into this wound, one of the doctors gave a start and exclaimed, ‘Good heavens, there is part of the knife still in the woman’s body.’

This remarkable circumstance naturally surprised us all, for the weapon had obviously broken, and the blade was left in the wound.

The following day a *post-mortem* examination was made as soon as the sheriff’s order had been obtained, and this examination led to the extraordinary discovery that part of the blade of a knife was, as the doctor had stated the day previous, still in the body. This portion measured no less than five and a-half inches. It was very sharp pointed, and bore on the blade the name of a Sheffield cutler. It had the appearance of being what is known as a dagger knife. That is, a pocket knife with a long blade that shuts up like the ordinary knife, but can be jerked out, and

is held back by a spring, and thus forms a most formidable dagger.

I have often wondered how it is that such dangerous weapons as these knives are allowed to be sold in the indiscriminate manner they are sold now. The sale of these and cheap revolvers ought to be prohibited except under stringent restrictions. The possession of such weapons is often the incentive for criminally inclined persons to take the lives of their fellows.

In the case of the poor woman I am dealing with great force had been used. The knife had entered between the fourth and fifth ribs, passing through the left lung and grazing the heart. This wound was of course mortal, but the medical testimony was to the effect that it did not necessarily produce instantaneous death, and the victim might have lived from a minute up to half an hour after receiving the wound. This would no doubt account for the agonised expression of the face.

The breaking of the knife was obviously an accident, and one point to try and determine was where was the handle? The autopsy revealed the fact that while the woman's heart was weak, she was in all other respects perfectly healthy, and might have lived for many years. Her apparent age then was not more than thirty.

It was now clear that a brutal and cowardly murder had been committed, and it was surrounded with all the elements of mystery. I had by this time formed certain opinions, and I put this question to the doctors, and asked them to give me an unqualified answer.

‘Could that knife have been driven into the victim's body by a woman?’

‘Yes,’ was the answer, ‘if she was a moderately strong woman.’

‘It would not require an ~~extra~~ordinarily strong woman to produce such an effect, would it?’ I asked.

‘Oh, no, for the knife, as you see, is long, sharp, and narrow bladed, and a woman possessed of fair muscular power, and by means of a good swinging blow, could have driven the weapon in as we have found it.’

My next step now was to institute a minute search for the remaining portion of the knife, but though I searched over at least half a square mile of ground from where the body was found, the handle of the knife was not discovered. The search was so thorough that had the object we sought for been within the radius named it could hardly have escaped detection. The criminal, therefore, had carried it off.

It was an easy matter to establish the fact that the victim was a stranger in the district, and presumably the criminal was also; but though the dead woman’s description was circulated far and wide, her identification could not be proved.

I saw at once that to unravel the threads of this mystery would not be an easy task, unless some blundering on the part of the criminal should put me on the right track. Naturally, I asked myself, ‘Why had the criminal and the victim come to this lonely farm?’ Its out-of-the-way position seemed to indicate that the murderer had been acquainted with that fact, and so selected it for the perpetration of the crime. But then how was it that the victim had been lured there? I confessed that that puzzled me, for I had come to the conclusion that the murder had been committed by a woman—firstly, on account of the

footprints, which were hardly those of a man's foot; secondly, the broken earring; thirdly, the piece of cloth sticking to the hedge, and which had been torn from a woman's dress. And, in addition, the doctor's statement showed that there was nothing improbable in my theory that it was a woman's hand that had driven the knife into the victim's body.

It will be seen from the foregoing that if my theory had any soundness in it, we were at once confronted by circumstances which were no less mysterious than novel. Inquiries were immediately set on foot to try and find out if the victim had been seen at all in the neighbourhood. But on this point there were conflicting opinions. Some people said a woman answering the description had been observed in Strathaven the day previous, but when these people were allowed to see the body, they could not state decisively that they had seen her before. Death, however, especially death by violence, so changes a person as to make recognition very difficult by those who were not well acquainted with the deceased before death. I therefore came to the conclusion that she had probably been in Strathaven on the previous day as suggested, though, even if this was so, it advanced us no nearer to the solution of what was a most difficult problem. What was necessary in the first instance was to get the dead woman recognised, so that we might know who she was, and that done it would be a good step on the way towards discovering who it was who had so foully slain her. Strangely enough, however, no one identified her. The crime, of course, caused great sensation in the quiet neighbourhood, where murder was almost a thing unknown; and equally, of course, the country people from round about flocked in to

Strathaven, and were allowed without 'let or hindrance' to see the body. But unless the dead woman had belonged to the neighbourhood, it was not likely that these people would know her, and that they failed to recognise her was proof that she was a stranger. Four days passed, and then we were necessitated to bury the remains, having first of all photographed them from various points of view. And so ended the first act of this strange tragedy. As is usual in such cases, there were all sorts of wild theories, and the police came in for the stereotyped abuse; while any number of well-meaning but silly people wrote letters to the papers and to the detective department of the police, pointing out what ought to be done, and what ought not to be done, in order to bring the criminal to justice. It is needless to say that these effusions had no effect, neither did they provoke comment. We whose duty it was to vindicate the majesty of the law knew our own business best, and were not likely to be influenced by the chattering of irresponsible people, as the late Lord Beaconsfield would have dubbed them. One thing was very clear to us—we had got an exceedingly difficult case to deal with, and no trace of the criminal having been got within a week of the crime, his or her chances of escape were greatly increased. The failure to get any trace satisfied me that the parties had come from a distance. By that I mean they did not belong to the immediate neighbourhood, but I thought it very probable that they did belong to Glasgow, unless they were mere tramps in the vagrant sense, and roamed the country without fixed habitation.

From the very first, however, the tramp theory did not find favour with me, and I will give my reasons

for this. There was nothing in the murdered woman's appearance to indicate the tramp, and tramps, as a rule, do not have such a sum of money on their person as was found on her. Then again, the piece of earring I had picked up was not such as would have been worn by a woman of the *genus* tramp. The boots that she was wearing were also another point against the idea of her being a tramp; they were almost new; and her under-clothing was too good and too clean for a woman of the vagrant class. I therefore dismissed the idea of her being a vagrant from my mind, and I assigned to her a somewhat higher position—either that of a better class of servant—probably a house or chambermaid—in a genteel family, or a tradesman's wife, in a humble way of business. Why I say 'a better class of servant' is that her hands did not indicate that she had been in the habit of doing any hard or very dirty work. While they were not the hands of a lady, there was a softness and whiteness about them which would not have been had she occupied the position of a mere scullery wench.

Although I felt that the case was a very difficult one, I did not like to think that it would entirely baffle us. To despair would have been entirely contrary to my disposition, and when, one morning about a fortnight after the murder, my chief said to me—

'Well, Donovan, I am afraid the Strathaven affair will have to be relegated to the long list of undiscovered crimes,'

I answered—

'It is far too early to say that yet, sir. I confess it's a puzzler, but the most intricate puzzles are capable of solution.'

'Oh, yes,' he returned, 'every puzzle must have its

answer, but some are so difficult that even a genius may fail to find the solution.'

This remark put me on my metal. I could not bear the idea of failure. I never did like to think that the ruffians of society had more brain power and keener intelligence than the organised forces of law and order. I have frequently advanced as an axiom that criminals, even the most hardened and practised of them, betray themselves ultimately by some act or acts of stupidity that a child could not overlook. And in this case I was strongly of opinion that sooner or later something would come to light that would enable me to run the criminal down; and, as I pondered over the matter, it began to dawn upon me that already a thread was lying to my hand that I might be able to follow up, until it changed to a rope encircling the culprit's neck. This thread, I frankly confess, I had at first overlooked, for, however practised and pains-taking a man may be, some small detail may at first escape his observation.

And this was my case. I had overlooked a detail, or rather it had not struck me until I began to ponder over the matter. It was this. Whoever had committed the crime could not be an entire stranger to the place. My reason for coming to this conclusion is easily given. A person wholly unacquainted with the farm and its neighbourhood would have found no small difficulty in getting to the spot in the dark, for the farm was, as I have already remarked, a considerable distance from the main road. Then, again, why should an utter stranger have selected such an out of the way spot when a field much nearer would have answered the purpose? The more I took this view the more I inclined to a belief

that the murderer was acquainted with the farm. I therefore began to question Mr. Duncan, the farmer, about the people he had in his employ.

‘Surely,’ he exclaimed with some indignation, ‘you don’t think that any of my people have been guilty of this butchery?’

‘Never mind, sir, what I think,’ I replied, ‘my business and my duty are to hunt down the criminal. A crime has been committed, that is certain, and my experience of criminals suggests certain possibilities. It is, therefore, clearly my place to test these possibilities, hence the reason for my inquiries.’

A little reflection soon showed him that I was right, and he at once gave me a list of all his servants. I asked many searching questions about the females, for it grew upon me that the murder had been committed by a woman, and naturally this idea prompted the query, Why should a woman have done it? And logic at once responded—‘She did it out of jealousy.’ Assuming, therefore, that I was right, it followed as an inevitable sequence that the murdered woman had had a lover and a rival, and in a fit of madness begotten by the jealousy the rival had resorted to this dreadful method to get rid of one who, probably, was more successful than herself in winning the man’s affections.

In Mr. Duncan’s employ there were at least a dozen females of very varying ages, and I managed with, as I think, some adroitness to have a word with each of these females without arousing her suspicions, and after that I felt positively certain that not one of them, either directly or indirectly, had had anything to do with the crime. I was, in consequence, baffled, but still with doggedness, pigheadedness if you like, I stuck to my text that the crime had been committed

by a woman. But then you see my pigheadedness, if that is the term to be used, was the result of many years' experience in unravelling very knotty points in connection with criminals. This experience had taught me to view things from a very different standpoint to that taken up by the general public. And little matters of details that escaped the public eyes were to me items of grave importance.

My failure to detect amongst Mr. Duncan's female servants any sign that would have acted as a guide baffled me, as I have said, but it did not daunt me, and I stuck to my theory about the murderer being acquainted with the neighbourhood. So I was led by this to inquire about servants who had left the employ within a comparatively recent period.

'Oh!' exclaimed Mr. Duncan, 'you see at every hiring term we are always shifting our hands. With some exceptions, farm servants, as a rule, don't stick long in a place. They have always got a notion that they can better themselves by getting a place where they won't have so much work. It is therefore not easy for a farmer with a large holding to keep much count of all the folk he may have had in his employ in the course of half a dozen years.'

'I can well understand that,' I answered, 'and yet, perhaps, you can tell me if you have had a woman in your service who might, under given circumstances, have been guilty of such a deed as this?'

He scratched his bald pate in a very puzzled way, for my question had confused him, and he had to rattle his brains a good deal before he could arrive at a definite opinion.

'Well, you see,' he remarked thoughtfully, 'that's a gey difficult question to answer, because anything

I might say would tend probably to throw suspicion on a person who was innocent.'

'Probably it might have that tendency,' I answered, 'but I should know what value to set upon your information. If it seemed to me to contain no element of suspicion I should have no suspicion. If, on the other hand, it should strike me as being worth acting upon with a view to further investigation, you may rest assured I should proceed with the utmost caution. It is never my habit to do things rashly, and I should be very sure of my position before taking any steps that would be calculated to jeopardise the honour and liberty of any one.'

This argument satisfied him, and he replied, 'I am sure you would, I am sure you would, for it's a dreadful thing you see for an innocent person to fall under suspicion of having been concerned in such a foul deed as this. Now, there is one person I mind of who was with me for a year, and left two years ago. Her name was Jessie Macfarlane, and she had charge of the dairy.'

'Oh, indeed, and do you remember anything peculiar about her?'

'Well, I mind she was a braw-like lassie, but, man, she had an awfu' temper.'

'She was passionate, was she?'

'Ay, she used to flare up like a powder mill.'

'And what did she leave you for?'

'Well, she wasna very steady, and I put her awa.'

This bit of information, meagre as it was, caused me to feel considerable interest in Jessie Macfarlane, and to want to know more about her.

'Why did you put her away?' I asked.

'Oh, I couldn't do with her here, for she was gey

light-headed, and her face was that pretty that all the lads on the farm were just raving about her.'

'What do you mean when you say she was light-headed?'

'She was no serious enough for me. She was just aye giggling and laughing, and flirting with the lads so that they couldna mind their wark.'

'Humph,' I muttered, as my interest in this young woman deepened, and I felt that it was my duty to know more about her. Of course it was not altogether an uncommon thing for a good-looking female in an establishment where many men were kept to be a source of worry. For men, no matter what their station in life, are attracted by a pretty face, and will vie with each other in paying it homage. And a woman who is conscious of her power in this respect needs to have a strong will and evenly-balanced mind if she is to avoid getting 'light-headed,' as farmer Duncan termed it. On the first blush, therefore, it may appear as if I was not justified in harbouring even a shadow of suspicion against the pretty Jessie Macfarlane. But the detective eye sees things that the untrained eye cannot see. And if the reader will bear in mind that, firstly, I had brought myself to regard as almost certain that the murder had been committed by a woman; and, secondly, that the murderer was acquainted with the farm, it will be better understood why I should come to feel some suspicion that Jessie Macfarlane might know something about it. At any rate, she fitted in with my theory of the crime. She was a missing link in the chain I had been making up, and I was not the person to pass by this link without testing it and examining it in every possible way. I must prove myself either wrong or right

beyond all question of doubt before I should feel satisfied.

‘Tell me, Mr. Duncan,’ I said, ‘do you think now that this Jessie Macfarlane might have become capable of committing such a dreadful crime as this?’

The point blank question staggered him a little, and I saw that as a conscientious man he was troubled. Naturally, he was reluctant to say anything that might tend to cast a slur on an innocent person. But, on the other hand, he so fully recognised the heinousness of the tragedy that he felt everything possible should be done to bring the criminal to justice.

‘Upon my word,’ he said, ‘I scarcely know how to answer you. I always thought that there was a bit of the devil in Jessie, and I’ve often said I pity the man who gets her.’

‘What was your reason for coming to that conclusion?’

‘Well, I couldn’t avoid it, seeing the temper she had.’

‘She was passionate, then?’

‘Indeed, ay. She would just fairly rave when she was crossed.’

‘Was she partial to any particular servant of yours?’

‘Yes, I think she was smitten with a lad named Ralph Saunderson.’

‘Was he smitten with her?’

‘I’ve heard say as he was.’

‘Where is he now?’

‘He left me the term before last. He got about two hundred pounds through the death of an uncle, and he told me he was going to start a grocer’s shop in Glasgow.’

‘And what became of Jessie?’

‘I don’t know where she went to.’

After this information I needed no second thought as to the course I should pursue. My way was clear before me. Jessie Macfarlane and Ralph Saunderson either knew something about the murder or they did not, and it was obviously my duty to prove one thing or the other. I therefore set about trying to find Saunderson. This was not a very difficult task, and I discovered him installed in a humble shop near Stobscross, Glasgow.

He was a man, as far as figure and face went, who would be attractive to some women, for he was by no means a bad-looking fellow, although somewhat dull-witted and heavy of intellect. He was rather in a despondent mood, and had been drinking, for his business had not prospered, and he had not only lost his money but was in debt.

I learned these particulars not from himself, but in the neighbourhood. He was of a reticent disposition, an uncommunicative and cunning sort of man. By cunning, I mean that he would do things slyly and secretly, and keep his counsel about them. But though I came to this conclusion in regard to him I could not believe him capable of committing so cold-blooded a tragedy as that which had taken place at Duncan’s farm.

I found that he knew nothing about the murder, and I did not question him about it. But I asked him if he was acquainted with one Jessie Macfarlane, and I watched him narrowly as I put the question, though his somewhat stolid countenance betrayed no emotion or surprise.

‘Oh, ay,’ he answered, with apparent unconcern. ‘I knew Jessie.’

‘Were you courting her?’

‘Not exactly.’

‘But you were sweethearting her?’

‘Yes. I was spoony on her at one time.’

‘And she was spoony on you?’

‘She was.’

‘You say she *was*. Does that mean that you have given her up?’

‘Well, you see we didn’t get on very well together.’

‘Why?’

‘Her tongue and her temper did not suit me.’

‘She has a violent tongue, has she?’

‘Yes. She was always nagging at me, and I couldn’t stand it.’

‘Was she jealous of you?’

‘She was.’

‘She had cause to be, perhaps?’

This question aroused him from his lethargy. He had hitherto answered my questions in an uninterested and mechanical sort of way. Now I saw his eyes light up and the colour in his face deepen as he said quickly—

‘Look here, mister, what is your little game? and what are you catechising me like this for?’

‘I have a reason.’

‘Maybe you have. But you’ll get no more out of me till I know what you are driving at.’

‘Well, just answer me one more question,’ I said. ‘Where does Jessie live, and when did you see her last?’

‘Tell me what you want to know for?’ said he.

‘No, I won’t tell you now. But take my word for it, if you don’t answer my question, you may get yourself into serious trouble.’

For the first time something like an expression of fear swept over his face, and with a sort of growl he said—

‘She stops at Paisley.’

‘Whereabouts?’

He gave me her address, and said that he had seen her within a fortnight, but had had a violent quarrel, and had not seen her since.

‘Did you quarrel about a woman?’ I asked.

‘Yes,’ he answered, reluctantly.

I was now determined to make a bold shot, and searching his face keenly said—

‘Would you be surprised to hear that the woman is dead?’

He fairly staggered and gasped out—

‘Good God! you don’t say so.’

‘Well, I have reason to think so. But tell me her name and describe her to me?’

‘Her name is Annie Muirhead, and she’s parlour maid to Mr. —— at Partick.

‘You’ve been courting her?’

‘Yes.’

‘And did Jessie Macfarlane know of that?’

‘Yes, she did.’

‘And that was the cause of quarrel between you?’

‘It was.’

I could no longer doubt now that I was on the right track, and that my theory was correct. A madly jealous and passionate woman had killed her more successful rival, and I was confirmed in this when by further questioning I elicited from Saunderson that he had told Annie that he intended to give up his shop and go back to work on Duncan’s farm. For Mr. Duncan, so he said, had always promised to take

him back any time he would go. His description of Annie Muirhead tallied exactly with that of the murdered woman, and when I told him that Annie had been killed he became deeply affected, and cried like a child. Half-an-hour later I was driving to Partick, and soon ascertained that Annie Muirhead had been missing from her place for nearly a fortnight. She had asked for a week off to go and see a sick sister, as she said, who lived at Berwick, and she had not been heard of since.

So far, then, my idea about the tragedy was fully confirmed, but it still remained to be seen whether Jessie Macfarlane was the criminal. It was reasonable to suppose that she was, but still there was no actual proof, and before proceeding to extremity I resolved to learn something more about Jessie, and so went down to Paisley.

I found that she was living in a very poor quarter of the town with her mother, but I was told that I could not see her as she was exceedingly ill and in bed. On my urging that it was absolutely necessary to her welfare that I should be allowed to see her, the mother consented at last to let me go into her bedroom.

I found her utterly prostrated, and evidently suffering from hysterical nervousness. She was a really pretty woman, as far as the mere features went, but there was something in her face that was not agreeable. It is really difficult to say what this something was. Yet there was a something. I noticed that my entrance caused an expression of alarm in her eyes, and in a feeble voice she asked—

‘What do you want with me, sir?’

My position was an extremely painful one, for there

could be no mistake about the woman's illness. But men in my profession have to think of duty before everything else. If this unfortunate creature had really been guilty of that awful crime she must pay the penalty, and pity could not be allowed to interfere with the stern demands of Justice. I therefore said, as I took my seat by the bedside—

‘I’ve come to ask you some questions about one Annie Muirhead.’

I saw the woman's face contort with a look of horror and fear as I said this, and I was certain now that she was the murderess.

‘What about her?’ she asked fiercely.

‘She’s been murdered,’ I answered bluntly.

‘I know it,’ she exclaimed, and then she broke into wild hysterical screams, and I left her to obtain a warrant for her arrest. I returned in about two hours, and was met by the mother, who was wild with grief, and as soon as she saw me she exclaimed—

‘Oh, sir, my poor lassie’s dead. She’s taken something that’s done for her.’

This proved to be too true. A little while after I had left Jessie Macfarlane had ended her existence by swallowing a large dose of oxalic acid which had been used for cleaning some brass things.

Further investigation led to the discovery in Annie Muirhead's box of a letter which had evidently been forged by Jessie Macfarlane. It was written as if it had come from Saunderson, and he was made to say that he had gone back to Duncan's farm, and it begged of her to meet him and he would get a lodging for her for a few days in Strathaven.

This forged letter led her to her doom, and the light it threw upon the matter made the rest clear. There

is no doubt that Saunderson had shamefully trifled with the feelings of Jessie, and she being of a passionate, fiery, and revengeful temperament, resolved to murder her more successful rival, and the cunning of her nature was displayed in the way she lured her victim to that lonely farm, thinking probably that it would render the detection of the crime impossible. The fierceness and determination with which she slew her victim suggested uncontrollable passion that fell little short of actual madness. Further confirmation that the guilt was hers was furnished by the fellow earring to the one I had picked up being found amongst her things, and the morsel of cloth I had taken from the hedge was the same as one of her dresses, which was rent, and a piece was missing. It was also much stained with blood. Thus what promised at first to be a profound mystery was fully cleared up, and the deed, terrible as it was, was marked by the usual vulgar elements which distinguish this class of crime.

THE MISSING DIAMONDS.

MR. JOHN BRANSCOMBE was a stockbroker in the city of London, and was said to be wealthy. As a rule, stockbrokers do flourish, while their clients do the reverse. Mr. Branscombe lived in excellent style at Putney. He had a large mansion-like house. He kept many servants, his carriage, horses, and dogs. He gave good parties; his wines were choice; his cigars ditto; while his billiard-room was said to be one of the handsomest private billiard-rooms in or near London.

Mr. Branscombe was married, and had one little girl. But he was old enough to be his wife's father, for he was fifty or thereabout, and she was only five-and-twenty. Mrs. Branscombe was charming, and even women had to admit that she was handsome; while as for men—well, they would dance attendance upon her like slaves. She had been a Miss Ethel Lewin, whose father had also been a stockbroker, and he and Branscombe had been closely mixed up together in business. Branscombe had long been in love with her before marrying her. At last Lewin came to lie on his death-bed, and he said to his old friend—

‘Why don’t you marry the girl?’

‘Ah, that is just what I desire to do, but——’

‘But what?’

‘I’m afraid I’m a little too old for her.’

‘Not a bit of it, dear boy. She will make you a splendid wife, and I know you will do all that mortal man can do to make her happy. She has been well brought up. Her mother has had no grandee notions about her, but has taught her to be useful in the kitchen, and ornamental in the drawing-room. She can play the cook or be the lady, as circumstances require. You and I are old cronies, and there is no one I know I would prefer to you for a son-in-law. I can give the girl a nice plum, so she is worth having.’

Mr. Branscombe, who had conscientiously scrupled to pop the question on account of the disparity in age, acted on the suggestion of his friend, and proposed to Ethel. She, following her mother’s advice and her father’s wishes, accepted him, and Mr. Lewin lived long enough to see them married.

Now, so far as outward signs went, the Branscombes’ married life was a very happy one. They had a sweet little tot of a daughter, who had inherited her mother’s beauty. They had troops of friends, all the luxury and comfort that the heart of human being could desire, and plenty of money to supply their wants. But Mr. Branscombe, unfortunately, was troubled with a silent and gnawing sorrow. He was jealous. The green-eyed monster cankered his happiness.

It was my privilege to enjoy the personal acquaintance of the Branscombes, and occasionally I was honoured with an invitation to their house. I thus knew something of their domestic life. One morning Branscombe came into my office in a hurried, agitated sort of way. That caused me considerable surprise.

‘Something has upset you this morning,’ I said calmly.

‘My God, Donovan, yes,’ he exclaimed, as he banged his highly-polished beaver on the table and mopped his heated forehead.

‘Well, don’t get excited, but tell me what it is.’

‘I’ve had a fearful row with Mrs. Branscombe.’

‘Indeed! I’m very pained to hear that. But what has the row been about? Jealous again, eh?’

‘That is exactly it.’

‘Well, now, of whom are you jealous?’ I asked with a smile, and attaching no serious importance to his jealousy.

‘Of young Williams.’

‘What? The son of Captain Williams, your neighbour?’

‘Yes.’

‘But what are your grounds of jealousy?’

‘I have long suspected that he was paying too much attention to my wife, and last night I happened to go home a little earlier than usual, and surprised them together in the drawing-room. It made my blood boil. I turned him out, and gave her a little of my mind. Of course there was a scene. She went into hysterics or something, and this morning I have been obliged to send for the doctor.’

‘My dear sir, I think you have been singularly indiscreet and hasty. I am sure, from what I know of Mrs. Branscombe, she dotes upon you.’

‘I know I dote on her,’ he moaned, as he pressed his hand to his head.

‘Of course you do, and it’s very absurd to let this stupid jealousy destroy your peace of mind.’

‘My God, Donovan, it is not stupid jealousy,’ he cried out. ‘I have every cause for it.’

‘Well, now, what do you want me to do?’

‘I want you to watch her and Williams, and if I find there is anything between them I’ll shoot her and myself too—by heavens I will.’

‘Tut, tut, man, don’t talk such nonsense,’ I answered. ‘Let me advise you now as a friend and well wisher. Do not subject your dear wife to such an indignity as watching her. Or, at any rate, as a friend of you both I must decline to undertake the task. I’m willing to stake my reputation on your wife’s honesty, and you do her a cruel injustice to suspect her. She is one of the best of women, and for your darling little girl’s sake let no shadow come between you.’

Mr. Branscombe, who was a most generous and impulsive man, was moved to tears, and wringing my hand, he stammered—

‘Donovan, it wrenches my heart to pieces to think anything wrong of her. I—I would fain believe you are right. Perhaps I have been hasty, and I’ll take your advice.’

In a few minutes he went away, and I felt very glad the matter had ended. I knew the young Williams he spoke of. He had led a very wild and fast life, and had been a great trouble to his father, who was a retired military officer. Young Williams was about thirty years of age, and had the misfortune to be very good looking, with a peculiarly fascinating manner; but his looks were somewhat marred with dissipation. But, nevertheless, I was too much a man of the world not to know that he was a dangerous companion for a woman, though I made an exception in Mrs. Branscombe’s favour. I had always regarded her as a woman of such sound common sense that I could not bring myself to believe that she would be so foolish as

to desert a trusting, doting, and wealthy husband for a battered, penniless young roué like Alfred Williams.

Mr. Branscombe was so much influenced by what I had said to him that he left his office at twelve o'clock determined to purchase a peace-offering and hurry home with it to his wife. His thoughts ran upon a piece of jewellery notwithstanding that his wife had plenty, and so he took a hansom and drove to Streeter's in Bond Street. He had no intention of going beyond twenty or thirty pounds in his purchase, but his eye alighted on a magnificent aigrette of brilliants. He looked at it, turned away and examined some bracelets. Then he went back to the aigrette, and at last asked the price.

Seven thousand five hundred pounds.

It was rather a large sum, though nothing to Mr. Branscombe. He could make as much as that sometimes in a morning before luncheon, and he thought to himself—

‘That aigrette would certainly fetch Ethel and heal the wound.’

His wife had rather a weakness for diamonds, and so, without further consideration, he drew a cheque for the amount; had the aigrette packed in a box, and took it home with him.

He found his wife in bed, pale, miserable, and unhappy. But he kissed her, asked her forgiveness, presented her with the costly little gewgaw he had purchased, and all was well.

She soon got over her hysterical attack, and in a few days he called on me with a beaming face, told me what I have related, and thanked me for the advice I had given him.

On two or three occasions after this I had the

pleasure of partaking of his hospitality, and on two occasions, at least, Mrs. Branscombe wore the diamonds in her splendid hair, though she knew nothing of that morning visit her husband had paid me to my office, nor how in some measure she owed the possession of the brilliants to me.

About six months later I received a telegram from Mr. Branscombe requesting me to go down to his house immediately on urgent business. The telegram had been sent from Putney, and, full of wonder as to what this pressing demand meant, I started off.

It was the end of summer, and, on arriving at Mr. Branscombe's residence, I learned that he and his wife and child had only the previous evening returned from a two months' tour on the Continent. They had been to France, Germany, and Italy, and had spent two weeks out of the time at Wiesbaden.

'And what is it this time, Branscombe?' I asked as he joined me in the library.

'Robbery,' he answered curtly.

'Oh! Where, of what, and when?'

'Where; I don't know. Of what—the aigrette of diamonds I bought my wife at Streeter's. When—I am as ignorant of as where.'

It appears that Mrs. Branscombe had taken most of her jewellery with her, including the aigrette. She had worn it two or three times at the opera, but on arriving home on the previous night, when the jewel case was opened the aigrette was found to be missing.

I received the information with a somewhat grave countenance, because diamonds were so easily disposed of on the Continent, and I did not see much chance of recovering the stolen property. But one little

peculiarity immediately struck me, and I asked this pointed question—

‘Was the aigrette the only thing stolen from the jewel case?’

‘Yes, I believe so. But you had better see my wife,’ he said, laying his hand on the bell.

‘Stay,’ I answered, ‘I will see her later on. In the meantime, could you let me see the jewel case unknown to any one?’

‘Oh, yes, I think so. My wife has some visitors in the drawing room. We can easily slip upstairs to her boudoir, and I know where she keeps her keys.’

‘Come then,’ I answered, ‘let us go at once.’

Accordingly we went upstairs to the magnificent little room known as Mrs. Branscombe’s boudoir. After some hunting about, the keys were found, and a little safe let into the wall in her room opened, and the jewel case produced. It was a stout, polished oak case, securely bound round with brass bands. It had a Chubb’s patent lock, and, in addition, the bands were fastened with padlocks.

I noted at once that the box had not been tampered with, and that, taken in connection with the fact that the diamonds were the only things stolen, was to me a suspicious circumstance, and I thought to myself, ‘this will prove a clue or I am much mistaken.’ However, I did not mention this to Mr. Branscombe, and we went downstairs again. When we got into the library I said—

‘Before mentioning anything to Mrs. Branscombe, I should like to see her maid.’

‘Of course, you can do that. But I hope you don’t suspect her. I’ll vouch for the honesty of Phoebe.’

‘Oh, I do not suspect any one at present. But if

you place this matter in my hands you must let me go to work in my own way.'

'My dear fellow, certainly,' he exclaimed. 'But have a glass of sherry and a biscuit. Then I shall leave you, as I have to start for the city. Perhaps if I do not see you again to-day you'll report progress as soon as possible.'

'Yes, I'll do so.'

'And you know one doesn't like to have one's things stolen, and seven thousand five hundred pounds is rather a big sum to lose that way. If I lost it on 'Change I'd think nothing of it; but I be hanged if I am going to let any one fleece me out of that amount with impunity if I can help it.'

'You may rely upon my doing all in my power to bring the thief to justice,' I replied, 'though I much fear the diamonds will not be recovered.'

'Why?'

'Well, they are things for which there is such a ready market, and the thief would lose no time in exchanging them for money.'

'Ah,' muttered Mr. Branscombe reflectively, 'I suppose so. At any rate, do your best.'

'I will,' I answered.

The sherry and biscuits were discussed, and then Mr. Branscombe went citywards, having first of all given Phoebe Martin instructions to join me in the library.

Phoebe was rather a pretty woman about thirty, with an honest expression of face on the whole, and yet there was something about her which made me think she could keep her own counsel when she liked.

'Well, Phoebe,' I began, 'this is a serious business, the loss of your mistress's diamonds?'

'Yes, sir, it is indeed.'

‘Have you any theory as to how they have been stolen?’

‘No.’

‘I note that the case has not been tampered with.’

‘How do you know?’ she asked quickly.

‘Because I have examined it.’

I saw as I said this that there was an all but imperceptible change in the maid’s face, and her eyes fell away from mine.

‘Well, yes, it’s true,’ she answered, ‘the case has not been touched, and my impression is the diamonds were stolen in Wiesbaden.’

‘What makes you think that?’ I asked quickly, ‘I thought you had no theory?’

‘Oh, well, if you call that a theory,’ she exclaimed, with an indignant shake of her head, for like all women she did not like to be bowled out in an inconsistency.

‘It comes very near a theory,’ I remarked with a smile. ‘But surely you knew when you left Wiesbaden whether the jewels had been packed or not?’

‘No, I did not. We went from Milan to Wiesbaden. My mistress had worn the aigrette at the opera at La Scala, at Milan, and I never saw it again after I had put it into the case that night. At Wiesbaden Mrs. Branscombe wore her ordinary jewels, and it was only when we came home last night that we found the diamonds were missing.’

‘Umph, it’s a very mysterious case,’ I remarked. ‘Very mysterious. Now do you suppose, Miss Phoebe,’ I asked, fixing my eyes upon her, ‘that the robbery took place while the things were in transit?’

‘Yes, of course I do,’ she answered with a certain sharpness.

‘Well, now, if that was the case the mystery is increased, because you see the box is intact; and then, again, why did the thieves take the diamond aigrette and leave the other jewellery?’

‘How can I tell you?’ she snapped angrily, and looking at me with flashing eyes.

‘There is nothing to be got by losing your temper,’ I answered with a smile.

‘Then, why do you cross-examine me?’ she exclaimed. ‘Do you suppose I stole the thing?’ Here she pulled out her handkerchief and burst into tears.

‘I haven’t formed any definite opinion on the subject,’ I answered evasively. ‘But you are Mrs. Branscombe’s maid, and I am given to understand that it is your especial duty to look after her jewel case. Is that not so?’

‘Yes, it is,’ she sobbed. ‘But I know nothing at all about the loss of the diamonds; and you had better see my mistress and talk to her.’

‘I intend to see her; but I had an object in seeing you first.’

‘Well, I’ll go and send her to you,’ said Miss Phoebe.

‘No. If you please you’ll stay here. I wish to see her in your presence.’

‘I shan’t stay,’ she exclaimed with a little display of fieriness as she moved towards the door.

‘Stay, Miss Martin,’ I said in such a peremptory tone, and with such firmness, that she paused and looked at me with astonishment. ‘You will be good enough to comply with my request, for remember I have the power to arrest you on suspicion.’

She turned deadly pale, a look of fear came into her face, and with a cry she threw herself into a chair and buried her face in her hands.

Of course, it will be quite understood that I had a distinct motive in not letting her leave the room. I had not, however, arrived at any definite conclusion as to the guilty party. I could hardly do that with the meagre evidence I had to go upon, but certain logical theories had suggested themselves to me, and, if I did not exactly think that Phoebe Martin was guilty of the robbery herself, I most certainly had a vague notion that she was in a position to throw some light upon this extraordinary case. The fact of the jewel box not having been tampered with showed that the diamonds had not been stolen from the box, unless that had been left purposely open by a confederate. The possibility of that I did not overlook, and, assuming such to be the case, the question arose—‘Who was the confederate?’ and to that there could hardly be any other answer than ‘Phoebe Martin.’ An ordinary thief, had he broken open the box, would have cleared out more of the jewellery, which represented a large sum of money, but, the box not being broken open, the thief, as it seemed, had had facilities placed in his way to clear off the diamonds alone.

Turning to the weeping woman in the chair, I said—

‘Miss Martin, I am going to ring the bell for one of the servants, in order that I may send a message to Mrs. Branscombe. May I advise, therefore, that you should compose yourself, for you being in tears is suggestive, and the servant might gossip in the kitchen.’

She took the hint, and without speaking she rose from the chair, crossed the room, and stared out of the window. Then I rang the bell, and the servant appeared.

‘Be good enough to convey my compliments to

your mistress, and ask her if she will favour me with her presence here for a few minutes."

The servant retired, and I walked to the window and stood alongside of Phoebe.

'You seem to have a very decided opinion,' I said, 'that the diamonds were stolen in Wiesbaden. Will you please to tell me what has influenced that opinion?'

'Nothing,' she answered sharply, and without looking at me, but still staring in an abstracted way through the window.

'Come, come, now, Phoebe,' I said persuasively, 'when a woman is decided she usually knows why she is so; and do not forget, please, that I am under orders from Mr. Branscombe to find out, if possible, who stole the diamonds. Therefore I am only doing my duty in questioning you, and if you have the interest of your master and mistress at heart you will do all you can to assist me in unravelling the knotty skein.'

Instead of answering me, she pressed her handkerchief to her eyes again and sobbed bitterly, and she was in that position when Mrs. Branscombe appeared.

The lady greeted me warmly—a little too effusively, I thought—and it occurred to me that she was agitated. She glanced hurriedly at her maid, and asked, with a shade of alarm in her tone—

'Why, whatever is the matter with Phoebe?'

'I should say nothing very serious at present, Mrs. Branscombe. Possibly your husband would tell you that he was going to speak to me about the stolen jewels?'

'No,' she answered breathlessly, and changing colour, 'he did not tell me so, Mr. Donovan.'

'Yes,' exclaimed Phoebe, quickly turning round for

the first time and exposing a very red face, 'and Mr. Donovan has been questioning me as if he thought I was the thief.'

'Not quite so, Miss Martin,' I returned with a bow. 'But as the custodian of your mistress's jewels, you are, or ought to be, in a position to assist in the elucidation of this strange robbery.'

I had watched Mrs. Branscombe narrowly as I spoke, and I was perfectly sure she was confused and ill at ease. Why I could not imagine then, though it did flash through my mind that here was a plot.

The lady seemed to make an effort to recover herself; then she spoke.

'Oh, as far as I can form an opinion, I think the facts are perfectly clear. The diamonds were stolen in Wiesbaden.'

'Why do you think so?' I asked quickly, and that idea about the plot taking a little more definite shape in my mind.

'Why?'—this confusedly. 'Well, I am sure of it.'

'But why are you sure of it, Mrs. Branscombe?' I asked smilingly, and in a tone that I hoped would put her at her ease.

'Because I wore them in Milan, and never saw them after.'

'But might they not have been stolen in Milan?'

'Oh, yes, of course,' she exclaimed, with a sort of joyfulness, as though my question had suggested a way out of some difficulty.

'Perhaps you will permit Miss Martin to retire now,' I remarked, 'as at present I have no further questions to put to her.'

'Of course she can go if she likes,' answered Mrs. Branscombe, displaying a faint irritation, and Martin,

as if only too glad to get away, hurried out of the room.

When she had gone I said—

‘Mrs. Branscombe, it is my duty to tell you that your maid has informed me that she put the diamonds in the case the night after you had worn them at La Scala, and she, too, is of opinion that they were stolen in Wiesbaden. Certain it is they were not stolen in transit between the two places unless Phoebe was a party to the robbery.’

‘Mr. Donovan!’ exclaimed the lady with warm indignation. ‘I hope you do not suspect Phoebe of being capable of such a thing.’

‘Have you full and perfect confidence in her?’ I asked.

‘Yes.’

‘Why?’

‘Because I have.’

‘That is a purely feminine reason,’ I remarked with a laugh. ‘Possibly, however, you have good grounds for believing that she had nothing to do with the robbery?’

‘Of course I have,’ said the lady.

‘Very well then, that narrows the inquiry somewhat. Now, both you and she seem to think that the jewels were stolen in Wiesbaden. Phoebe can give me no reason for her thinking so. But I am sure you must have formed some opinion on the subject, and you will aid me possibly in my inquiries if you will kindly say *why* you fix upon Wiesbaden as the *locale* of the robbery?’

Mrs. Branscombe’s pretty face was very pale now, and there was a troubled look in her eyes. But instead of answering me directly she said with pretty petulance—

‘Really I can’t understand what my husband wanted to engage a detective for in this matter. Of course, when I got home I told him about the loss of the diamonds, because I knew if I did not wear them he would inquire about them. But I don’t see that there is any necessity to make all this fuss. The things have gone and there’s an end of it, and I don’t suppose we shall ever hear tale or tidings of them any more.’

‘But, madam,’ I exclaimed in surprise, ‘the *things* cost your husband seven thousand five hundred pounds.’

‘Well, and what of that? It is a mere flea bite to him.’

‘It is gratifying,’ I answered, ‘that your husband can so well afford to lose that large sum, which would be a fortune to many men. But I may inform you that he has instructed me to use every means possible to find out what has become of the diamonds, and as I have a strict and conscientious regard for duty I shall carry out his orders.’

Mrs. Branscombe rose from the chair on which she had been sitting. A warm flush had spread over her face, and she looked beautiful even in her indignation.

‘Very well, Mr. Donovan,’ she said scornfully. ‘As I am not in a position to give you any further information, I must leave you and my husband to do what you like in the matter. As I have some visitors waiting for me you will excuse my going. Good morning, sir.’

With a graceful bow she swept out of the room, leaving me standing there in astonishment, and I had to confess to myself that for once in my life I had been nonplussed by a woman.

Although I was nonplussed, let it not be thought that I was disconcerted. The idea about a plot had now become a confirmed conviction with me, and I felt sure of two things—firstly, that Phoebe, the maid, was in a position to throw a good deal of light on the mystery, but would not do so; secondly, Mrs. Branscombe, for some deep and dark reason, was desirous that no attempt should be made to trace the lost property.

It will be gathered from the foregoing that I did not suspect Phoebe of being the thief, unless she had taken the diamonds, and her mistress did not wish to accuse her. That, however, seemed to me to be too absurd for consideration, inasmuch as no adequate motive could be suggested for so truly an extraordinary course on the part of a mistress. The lady might have been so attached to her maid as to be disposed, owing to mistaken generosity, to overlook a single act of petty pilfering, but when it came to a question of seven thousand five hundred pounds of value, the theory, from the commonsense point of view, was utterly untenable.

As it was evident that I could not count upon assistance from either the mistress or the maid, I saw that I should be compelled to unravel the tangled skein myself, and for some minutes I was not quite sure what plan I should pursue. The little rebuff I had received, as unexpected as it was disagreeable, had only stimulated me to use every exertion, and very soon my mind was made up, and I had decided on a course. My duty was a disagreeable one, for I had already made an enemy of Mrs. Branscombe, and I now had to leave the house where I had been a welcome guest in a manner which was suggestive of

an obnoxious tax-collector. Notwithstanding that, the butler bowed me out with obsequious politeness. No doubt he was in ignorance of the object of my visit then, but it was not pleasant to me to go away with the knowledge that Mrs. Branscombe now regarded me with feelings the reverse of friendly, for no other reason than that in the pursuit of my avocation I was simply doing my duty; but I thought to myself as I went down the garden path—

‘Poor Mrs. Branscombe has in some way or other been deceiving her husband, and, being fearful that I may bring this deception to light, she has allowed her woman’s feelings of fear and bitterness to betray themselves.’

In thinking over this I could not somehow bring myself to believe that she was very wicked. I preferred to think of her as having been guilty of folly, and I was hopeful that I might be able to prove to her that after all I was her true friend.

Taking the first train back to the city, I went direct to Mr. Branscombe’s office. He was not there, however, and I had to go on ‘Change to find him.

‘Well, Donovan!’ he exclaimed when we met, ‘what success?’

‘Not much,’ I answered.

‘But you have seen Mrs. Branscombe and Phoebe?’

‘Oh, yes; but they do not seem able to throw any light on the matter.’

He looked at me fixedly for some moments, then said—

‘Look here, when I left my home in the morning I wouldn’t for the world have suspected Phoebe. But since then I have been thinking the matter over; and what you pointed out to me—namely, that the box

was intact—has caused me to change my opinion. Now, tell me candidly, do you suspect the maid?’

‘I do not suspect the maid of having stolen the diamonds,’ I answered emphatically, although, as will be seen, there was some slight evasiveness in the answer.

‘I am glad of that,’ he said with a sigh of relief, ‘because I have always had a very high opinion of Phoebe. Now, what do you propose to do?’

‘I intend to go to Wiesbaden.’

‘To Wiesbaden!’ he exclaimed, opening his eyes to their fullest extent. ‘Why?’

‘Because it is there I hope to get hold of the threads that will lead me to a solution of what is now somewhat of a mystery.’

Mr. Branscombe reflected for a few moments. Then, as if a new light had broken in upon him, he said with the decisiveness that was characteristic of him when he had made up his mind to a thing—

‘Go, Donovan; and, look here, spare no expense. I do not care a pin supposing we never recover the diamonds, but there is something fishy in the business, and, by heavens, I’ll get to the bottom of it if it cost me ten thousand pounds.’

I saw that he spoke with suppressed excitement and, in order to reassure him, I said with a laugh—

‘Oh, we need not spend anything like that, and it’s probable the diamonds may be recovered. After all, you know it may resolve itself into a very commonplace affair. Some of the smart continental thieves who make a profession of robbing passengers’ luggage that is in transit are provided with all sorts of keys and appliances for opening locks; so we really must

not attach too much importance to the fact of the jewel-case not being broken open.'

This was not my honest opinion, but, under the circumstances, I felt it was justifiable to give expression to it so that my friend's mind might not be tortured. It certainly would have come near my opinion had it not been for the way Mrs. Branscombe and her maid had fenced my questions. I felt sure that they were concealing something from me, and I knew too much of human nature to suppose that when a woman had made up her mind to deceive a man she would help anyone to find out her deceit. Therefore I must play against her and discover the secret for myself.

Mr. Branscombe showed by his manner that he was reassured, for he answered in a more cheerful tone—

'Very likely you are right, Donovan, but get to the bottom of the affair. I am curious to know how the robbery was done. I confess that I've no hope of seeing the jewels back, but I be hanged if I shouldn't like to give the thief a few years' penal servitude.'

I left him, as business called him away, and that night I took a ticket by the Brussels train on my way to Wiesbaden.

On reaching my destination, I obtained quarters in the hotel, 'Les Quatre Saisons,' where the Branscombes had stayed. Being the fag end of the season, there were not many foreigners remaining in the town, and I thought if it was there the plot of the robbery had been hatched I might be able to get at the bottom of it. I proceeded with my inquiries very cautiously, for it must be remembered that both Mrs. Branscombe and her maid had stated that they only

discovered the robbery on reaching their home. If that was so the landlord of the hotel would know nothing about it. But my opinion was that the lady and Phoebe were aware of the theft in Baden, and what I wanted to get at was, why they were so anxious to conceal their knowledge.

My inquiries naturally commenced with the manager of the hotel, an intelligent and quick-eyed German.

I found that he remembered the 'Famille Anglaise Branscombe' very well, and he gave me the key-note by saying—

'Madame Branscombe is très distingué, and so handsome!'

'Yes, she is very handsome,' I replied, and then added, with an object—'And she is so much younger than her husband.'

'Mon Dieu, oui!' he exclaimed. 'Sometimes it is not so good for ze husband when he is so old and has such a pretty wife.'

'Why do you say that?' I asked carelessly. 'Did you observe anything frivolous in Madame's conduct?'

He shrugged his shoulders as he replied—

'Ze landlord of a hotel must be blind to ze zings that come under his eye.'

'Ah, precisely. That is diplomatic from the hotel keeper's point of view. But pray tell me, sir, for I have a very particular object in inquiring, is it within your knowledge that during her stay here Mrs. Branscombe met or had any communication with a gentleman?'

'Wherefore do you make ze inquiry?' he demanded, fixing his keen dark eyes upon me.

'I have come here specially to try and find out,' I answered.

He pulled his moustache reflectively for some moments, then he replied, with true German caution—

‘Madame et Monsieur were much liked in my house, and ze gentlemen were always polite to Madame, and in ze evening she and her husband sat in ze garden, and talked ver mooch with ze visitors.’

‘Just so. Most well-bred people staying in an hotel make themselves agreeable to their fellow-lodgers. But what I want to get at is, did you observe anything in Madame’s conduct which would have led you to suspect that she showed a partiality for any particular gentleman?’

‘Ah! monsieur,’ he exclaimed with a wink. ‘You try to make ze pump of me,’ and he imitated the motion of a pump handle by moving his arm up and down.

‘I do not wish to pump you,’ I answered. ‘I simply want you to answer me a plain question, and, in order that we may understand each other better, let me inform you that I am a detective officer, and it is most important that I should know something of Madame’s doings while she was here.’

The host’s face became very grave; and he took time to consider what answer he should give me. At last he spoke, and he said with that ponderous deliberateness peculiar to the German when he takes a very serious view of anything—

‘Madame was a little indiscreet.’ He paused as if doubtful whether he should say more.

‘Why?’ I asked.

‘I shall tell you. When Madame and her husband came to my house there was one gentleman here that was called Monsieur Williams. But I do not like zat man. He was in my house for six weeks, and he pay

me not for three weeks. I have told him to go, but he said he would soon have some money from his father. Madame arrive, and she meet Monsieur Williams in ze hall. They are var mooch astonish; and ze same night, when it was quite dark, one of my waiters have seen them in ze garden. Monsieur Williams had his arm round Madame's waist, and Madame was crying. Ze next day, in ze afternoon, Monsieur Williams pay me my bill, and he take ze six o'clock train for Cologne, and Madame met him at ze station.'

'How do you know she did?' I asked quickly.

'Because my porter who took ze luggage saw them at ze station.'

This statement was a confirmation of my own suspicions. But I heard it with sorrow, for it pointed to the only inference that could be drawn, which was that Mrs. Branscombe had deceived her husband. As yet, however, I only knew half the truth, or I might say only the beginning of it, though it was perfectly clear to me that I was not far wrong when I suspected a little plot; and there could be no doubt that Phoebe, the maid, was in the confidence of her mistress. My next move now was to get on the track of young Williams, for what I suspected was this—he had either stolen the diamonds, and by some means Mrs. Branscombe had come to know that he was the thief, though she would not prosecute him, or she had given him the diamonds. Whichever it was I resolved to find out the truth, and I hoped that I might be the means of not only showing Mrs. Branscombe how much folly she had been guilty of in the past, but save her from committing herself in the future. Perhaps it was a somewhat difficult task I had set myself, but I believed I could carry it out.

Williams had gone to Cologne, and thither I went after him. Not that I expected to find him there, but I expected at any rate to get on his trail. In a continental town it is an easy matter to find a person who is staying in an hotel, providing you know the person's name, for every proprietor is bound to send a list of all his arrivals to the head police office, where they are registered. My first step, therefore, was to go to the chief bureau of the police, where I ascertained, much to my agreeable surprise, that a Mr. Williams from London was staying at the Dom Hotel.

Williams had never met me, consequently I was a stranger to him, and so I took up my quarters at the same hotel. Before many hours were over I had learnt a good deal about my man, and, amongst other things, that he was then ill in bed, suffering from the effects of a debauch. The hotel people had been a little puzzled about him, for he was apparently not a tourist, at any rate he took no interest in those things that tourists are generally interested in, and he was obviously not a tradesman. He received but very few letters, seldom went out, and played billiards nearly all day, smoked, drank, and usually retired for the night in a state of muddle.

‘Has he any money?’ I asked my informant.

‘Well, I don’t think he has much now. He seemed to be pretty flush when he first came a little more than three weeks ago. But he has squandered a great deal.’

I was disconcerted by this, because if he had no money it rather pointed to the probability of his not having got the diamonds after all. For though he might have sold them far below their value, he must

have received between two and three thousand pounds, and he could hardly have squandered that in so short a time.

‘Why do you think he has not much money now?’

‘For this reason, two days ago his bill was presented and he could not pay it, but said that as soon as he was better he would raise money in the town on some valuable security he had.’

I laughed to myself as I heard this, and I thought ‘The bird is limed to a certainty.’

My plan was quickly formed, and I resolved on a little strategy. Taking the landlord to some extent into my confidence, I asked him to introduce me to Mr. Williams as Herr Fritz Forchheimer, and by a little manipulation of my hair and beard, and a certain arrangement of dress, I was enabled to present a tolerable likeness to a flourishing German Jew.

We went upstairs to Mr. Williams’ room together, and addressing the invalid the landlord said—

‘You will pardon me, Herr William, but as you told my waiter that you wished to be recommended to somebody who would advance you money on valuable security, I have taken the liberty of introducing to you my friend, Herr Fritz Forchheimer, of Forchheimer, Goldschmidt & Co., of Cologne. You could not have a better person to do business with.’

Williams, who really looked very ill and miserable, seemed somewhat surprised, but he answered with the petulance of one who is in suffering and feels irritated and annoyed at being disturbed—

‘Oh, very well, that’s all right. Leave me with this Mr. — What’s his name?’

‘Herr Fritz Forchheimer.’

‘All right; sit down, Mr. Forkhammer.’

‘Forchheimer,’ I said correctively, with a perfect German accent.

‘Damn it, man,’ he cried, ‘never mind about your name. Sit down. And look here, landlord, send me up a bottle of champagne. I shall die if I don’t have some fizz.’

I gave the landlord a look. He understood it, and, saying he would order the champagne to be brought up, he retired.

‘You are not in good health, Herr Williams?’ I began, as I put my hat on the table and drew a chair near his bedside.

‘I’m suffering from the effects of too much liquor,’ he snarled, ‘and I think I have been seeing devils. But I shall be all right when I get the champagne. They wouldn’t let me have it before because they thought I couldn’t pay for it. But they’ve made a mistake for once. I can buy their infernal house up.’

‘That is good, that is good,’ I murmured, as I took a pinch of snuff from a very fancy-looking box, and offered him some, but he turned away in disgust.

The champagne was now brought, and he drank off two glasses, one after the other, almost without drawing his breath.

‘Ah! By heaven, that is new life,’ he exclaimed, as he lay back on his pillow with a gratified sigh.

‘Now then, we can do business, I hope,’ I observed. ‘My firm is one of the best in Cologne, and can advance money to any amount. Do you wish to obtain a loan, Herr Williams, or to sell something?’

‘On what conditions would you lend me some money?’ he asked, turning his bleared eyes upon me.

‘If your position is good, and you can give good security, we would lend you money at 20 per cent.

and expenses. That is lower than any other house in the town. Have you some estates in England, Herr Williams ?

‘Estate!’ he exclaimed, breaking into coarse laughter. ‘Estate! Oh, yes, any quantity; but what the devil have my estates in England got to do with you here? Now, look here, Forgehammer——’

‘Forchheimer, Herr Williams.’

‘Well, Forge something or another. I don’t care a button what your name is, and I don’t want you to lend me money on my estates or anything else. I want to sell you something if you will buy it.’

‘What is it?’

‘Diamonds.’

My heart almost leapt into my mouth as he thus betrayed himself, but, retaining my composure, I said coolly—

‘Oh, yes, we buy diamonds when they are good.’

‘Well, mine *are* good. They belonged to my wife, who died six months ago. Her death sent me wrong, and I’ve run through a pile of money since. I’ve kept these diamonds by me thinking they would have to go sooner or later, and it turns out to be sooner than I expected.’

‘How much are you wanting?’ I asked.

‘As much as I can get. They are worth five thousand pounds, at least.’

‘Umph. That is a good sum, but please to let me see them?’

‘Oh, yes; I will let you see them,’ he answered, and, springing out of bed, he went to his portmanteau, and, opening the lid, he brought out a small cardboard box. Removing the lid from this, he disclosed Madame Branscombe’s agrette; but it was all crushed and

broken out of shape, and the diamonds were scattered about in the box. He placed it on the table beside me, then got into bed again. I examined the diamonds carefully, then, as I put on the lid again, I said in my natural voice—

‘Mr. Williams, I will take charge of these stones, and restore them to their rightful owner, Mrs. Branscombe.’

I do not think I have ever seen a man’s face change so suddenly to a ghastly pallor as did his when he saw that he was trapped.

‘You lie,’ he bawled hoarsely, ‘they are not Mrs. Branscombe’s.’

‘The lie is yours,’ I answered. ‘They are the property of that lady, and you stole them in Wiesbaden.’

‘You lie again,’ he hissed. ‘I did not steal them, she gave them to me. And, by God, you will not take them away.’

‘Stay,’ I said sternly, as he sprang up menacingly in bed. ‘I am an English detective officer, commissioned by Mr. Branscombe, stockbroker in the city of London, to recover these diamonds. He knows nothing as to how they came into your possession. If you remain quiet I will not accuse you of having stolen them. But if you are obstreperous in any way I will have you detained here until your extradition can be obtained on a warrant from London.’

He seemed utterly dumbfounded as he realised how thoroughly he was defeated, and as he pressed his hand to his throbbing temples he moaned—

‘As God is my judge, she gave them to me to pay my debts, and you have no right to take them.’

‘I have every right to take them, for it was shameful and infamous of you to accept them from her. She

has been weak and foolish, but she shall not suffer this loss.'

He seemed beside himself with disappointment and mortification, and for some moments he buried his face in the pillow, and I moved to the door. Then suddenly he sprang up again, and cried—

'Look here! For heaven's sake, don't leave one like this. Give me a ten pound note anyway to get me out of this infernal place.'

I considered a little, then told him that I would pay whatever he owed in the hotel, and place a hundred marks in the hands of the landlord, which would be given to him when he left the hotel.'

He made no acknowledgment of this offer, but once more buried his face in the pillow, and as I saw no use in prolonging the painful scene I left the room, carrying the diamonds with me.

I fulfilled my promise in regard to paying Williams' bill, and leaving five pounds for him in the hands of the landlord; and that night I left for London well pleased with the success of my mission.

On arrival in town I lost no time in going down to Putney, choosing an hour when I knew Mr. Branscombe had left home for his business. On sending my card up to Mrs. Branscombe, she returned word that she was engaged and could not see me. I was prepared for that refusal, and had written a little note saying that it was indispensable to her own interests and welfare that she should see me, as I had a most important communication to make. My note was marked 'Private and confidential,' and, as I anticipated it would, it brought the lady to me.

She was looking pale, anxious, and a little frightened, but nevertheless singularly attractive and charming

in a pale blue peignoir, trimmed with dentelles de Bruxelles of the daintiest and flimsiest kind. I placed a chair for her, and said with a view to setting her at her ease—

‘You are looking charming this morning, Mrs. Branscombe.’

‘Don’t waste time in idle compliments, Mr. Donovan,’ she said. ‘You have some business with me?’

Her voice was perceptibly tremulous, showing that she was agitated with suppressed excitement. I smiled as I answered—

‘The compliment is not an idle one, I assure you. But to business. It is my pleasure and privilege to be able to restore your missing diamonds to you.’

I produced from my pocket the box containing the jewels, and handed it to her. Her pretty face was full of astonishment and alarm, as she exclaimed with gasping breath—

‘Where did you get the diamonds from?’

‘From Mr. Williams in Cologne,’ I said, fixing my gaze upon her, though she could not meet my look, but, turning her head away, burst into tears. ‘Mrs. Branscombe,’ I continued, ‘I have learned a good deal since I saw you some days ago, and I have been able to rescue your jewels from an idle scoundrel; and I would venture with delicacy and feeling to express a hope that this little unpleasant episode may save you from much sorrow in the future, and enable you to avoid a pitfall, where lurk ruin, dishonour, and perhaps death. You have a kind, doting and indulgent husband, a magnificent home, and a sweet angelic child. For her sake, if for nothing else, do not blast your happiness and break your husband’s heart. I have taken the liberty to give expression to my feelings out

of the friendship I bear you ; and now, in restoring the jewels to you, let me say that your husband shall never know from my lips how I recovered the diamonds or from whom. Your future is in your own hands.'

She had been sobbing bitterly, but she rose now and held out her hand to me, and with difficulty she said—

'Mr. Donovan, I have done you a wrong, but you have opened my eyes and read me a lesson. Believe me when I say that my folly has been venial. A foolish fascination blinded me for a time, and I see, with a shudder, the brink of the fatal precipice upon which I tottered. You have saved me, and I thank you from my heart; and it is right you should know the truth. When we arrived in Wiesbaden I found to my horror that Williams was staying in the same hotel. He was in great distress, and importuned me to lend him some money. He said that he could not return to England until he had paid his debts, and that if I could not help him he would commit suicide. I was terribly frightened, but I knew I could not give him much money unknown to my husband. Fifty pounds in money was the extent to which I could go, and with Phoebe's connivance, and on condition that he would immediately leave Wiesbaden, I gave him the diamonds, telling him to sell them for as much as he could. That is the truth, and I have nothing more to tell.'

'I know it,' I answered as I shook her hand warmly, 'and now live for your husband and child in the future. You need not tell Mr. Branscombe anything. It is better not to do so ; it would make him so unhappy. Simply say I handed you the jewels, but did not tell you how I recovered them. Henceforth this matter is a dead secret between you and me.'

Her emotion choked her, and she could not speak, only press my hand in speechless gratitude.

‘I have only one condition to make,’ I added, ‘and that is that within six months you will discharge Phoebe. It is in your interest that she should go.’

‘I will, I will,’ she faltered.

I had no wish to prolong the interview, and left her, and as soon as I got back to the city I called on Mr. Branscombe.

‘Hullo, Donovan,’ he exclaimed cheerily, ‘I hardly expected to have seen you so soon. You’ve had no luck, I suppose?’

‘Oh, yes,’ I answered, ‘I have been fortunate enough to recover the diamonds, and I have restored them to Mrs. Branscombe.’

‘The deuce you have,’ he cried in amazement. ‘Well, you are a wonder. Now tell me how did you manage it?’

I smiled as I said—

‘Excuse me; but a detective’s business has its secrets as a stockbroker’s has. It suffices for me to say that I traced the jewels to the possession of a rascal in Cologne, and he gave them up to me on condition of my not prosecuting him.’

He shook my hand as warmly as his wife had done, though not prompted by the same emotion. I felt fully rewarded for my trouble, and though I had been compelled to practise a little deception I was conscious that it was forgivable, for I had saved much sorrow and suffering in the future.

About a fortnight later the English papers contained a paragraph which stated that the body of an English gentleman named Williams had been found in the Rhine at Cologne. He had been staying at the Dom

Hotel for some weeks, and was of somewhat dissipated habits, but how he came to be drowned there was no evidence to show.

For several years after that little affair of the diamonds I was a visitor at Mr. Branscombe's house. His fondness for his wife seemed to increase with his years, and her loyal affection for him was exhibited in a thousand ways. At length, with very short warning, my good friend Branscombe was gathered to his fathers. He went to his grave without ever knowing that little secret which his wife and I had kept so well.

The charming widow has never married again, but a short time ago the following marriage notice appeared in the London dailies :—

‘At St. George's Chapel, Hanover Square, Maude Muriel Branscombe, the only daughter of the late John Branscombe, Esq., stockbroker in the City of London, to Lionel Edgar, eldest son of Sir John Rowland, Esq., M.P.’

Maude, whose beauty even outrivalled her mother's, sent me a piece of her wedding cake, and as I penned her a few lines of hearty congratulations I was deeply thankful that I had not allowed the little shadow of evil that for a short time lay across her dear mother's path to darken her future, as it assuredly would have done had she been aware of it. There are times when it is the truest of human charity to be silent as to the truth.

HOW I CAUGHT A LAND SHARK.

THERE be land rats and water rats, land sharks and water sharks, and of the two latter the land shark is perhaps the more dangerous. At any rate, sailors have the most cause to dread them, for while Jack can keep out of the grip of the water shark, unless he is unfortunate enough to fall overboard in tropic seas, it is infinitely more difficult for him to avoid the land shark, who is generally so plausible and so well got up that his presence is never suspected. It is well known that sailors are amongst the most gullible people in the world; and Jack ashore, with his hard-earned pay in his pocket, is singularly liable to fall a prey to the waterside syrens and the voracious land sharks.

For a long time there had been many complaints that sailors in the neighbourhood of the docks at Leith were being robbed. It must not be supposed that these robberies were committed openly. Oh, no, the sharks were not such fools as that. Had they resorted to that means of fleecing their victims detection and conviction would have been easy. But they went to work in a far more systematic manner. Water sharks are usually preceded by pilot fish, which are said to guide them to their prey, and land sharks have their pilot fish in the shape of shameless creatures of the female sex, who lure Jack into the shark's maw.

The difficulty in tracing these robberies lay in the fact that the unfortunate victims were generally stupefied first of all with drink, they were then lured to some dark wynd or notorious house, and robbed of any money or valuables they possessed, and fortunate indeed they were if the plunderers did not strip them of the greater part of their clothing. In some cases the poor wretch was turned out in a state of semi-insensibility, or allowed to get sober in the house. But in either case when he came to his senses he had little or no recollection of what had occurred before he had entirely lost his senses; all that he did know was that his money was missing. Who had taken it he knew not, and even if he accused any one the great difficulty was to prove the robbery. These difficulties of proof made Jack chary of bringing any charge, and so the unfortunate fellow generally bore his loss with the best grace he could, and went off to sea again, to work like a horse for some months, only perhaps to lose his money again like an ass at the termination of his voyage. No class of our working population needs protection so much as sailors, for their love of jollity, their aptitude to an over-indulgence in strong drink, and their utter recklessness with their money, render them an easy prey to loafers and rogues.*

The robberies I have spoken of had become so frequent that at last I was requested to go through to Leith and see what I could do to bring the wretches to justice. What was wanted was such unmistakable

* Since the period with which I am dealing much has been done to improve Jack's condition, and he is better looked after now when he comes on shore than formerly. But still, though the trade of the touts and crimps has been rendered more difficult by stringent laws and heavy penalties, they still flourish and still batten on sailors, who are very apt to resent any interference with what they term their full liberty ashore.

evidence that a conviction would be certain, and such an example made that it might act as a deterrent.

In pursuing inquiries with a view to action I learned that a Jew named Isaac Levy, who acted as tout for sailors' lodging-houses and the cheap slop-sellers, was a ringleader, if not the actual organiser, of the gang who fleeced the seamen. But so wily was this man, so cute as the Yankees say, and so cautious, that he had up to this time defied detection. My interest naturally centred in this fellow, and I resolved to know more about him. I found that he lived with his wife and his two sons, aged eighteen and twenty respectively, in a wretched apartment in the lowest quarter of Leith. They pretended to be in a very poverty-stricken condition, and their landlord told me that he always had great difficulty in getting his rent.

Isaac Levy was a man of about fifty, of a sinister aspect. He had the unmistakable Jewish cast of face, but his eyes were small and bead-like, and overhung by coarse, ragged eyebrows that imparted to the face a repellant expression. Cunning, in fact, was written on every line of his dirty features. He bore the character of being an unscrupulous rascal, who would do anything for money; but up to then his caution and cunning had enabled him to keep out of the grip of the law.

Those who have read my previous books will remember that in one or two of my stories I refer to a certain physical resemblance I myself bear to the Jewish type, although let me repeat that I haven't a drop of Jewish blood in my veins. This physical peculiarity, however, enables me, with the aid of dress and a few other accessories, to simulate an Israelite with great success; and I resolved, in the character of a Jew, to try and learn

something of Isaac Levy's *modus operandi*, and, if possible, get evidence against him. Disguising myself, therefore, in this way, I one evening entered a public-house much frequented by sailors, and where, after a certain hour, Mr. Isaac Levy was almost invariably to be found. I have reason to know that my resemblance to the character I had assumed was very perfect, and as I had a good acquaintance with the ways and habits of Jews I had no fear of being detected.

Soon after entering, I saw that I was an object of the greatest interest to Isaac Levy, who regarded me steadfastly for some time, though I pretended not to see him. Suddenly, however, I turned round and faced him, and, looking at him, exclaimed—

‘I think you are one of my people. I am so glad.’

After some preliminary greeting, he asked me where I came from, and I said I had been in Edinburgh, but was anxious to get to Rotterdam.

‘Have you any money?’ he asked.

‘Oh, yes,’ I answered, ‘I have money, but I do not want to pay much for my passage.’

‘How much will you pay?’ he asked.

‘I should not like to pay anything, but I will pay just so little as I can,’ was my answer.

‘Will you go to the length of five shillings?’

‘Yes,’ I replied.

‘Good,’ he answered. ‘I will undertake to get you a passage for that sum, and one shilling for my services. Is that a bargain?’

I reflected a little, and then told him that I would assent to that; first asking him what influence he possessed to get me a passage so cheaply.

‘Never you mind,’ he answered, ‘I have the influence, and can do what I say.’

He then offered to pay for something to drink for me as I was a co-religionist of his. I accepted the offer, and as we discussed the liquor he became more communicative, and told me that he had lived in Leith for years, and had great influence amongst the stewards and captains of vessels. I did not ask him what had given him this influence, as it was no part of my plan to question him, which might have aroused his suspicions. My game was to lead him to suppose that I was very confiding and simple, and that I succeeded in this was presently proved, by his asking me to lend him a shilling, as he found he had no more money on his person. I handed him the shilling, after making him promise that he would return it. He spent sixpence of it in more liquor, and the other sixpence he put into his pocket. In half-an-hour or so he looked at the clock and said he was going away for a little while, as it was about the time when he would be able to see his friend with reference to my passage to Rotterdam. He took his departure. I had no fear about his not coming back. The prospect of getting another five shillings out of me would lure him as certainly as a lump of salt pork lures a sea shark.

An hour passed before I saw my friend again. Then he returned with his small eyes twinkling like a ferret's, and a smile playing about his mouth.

Approaching me he whispered confidentially: 'It's all right.'

'Is it?' I replied with a well-assumed expression of joyfulness.

'Yes. The vessel sails for Rotterdam to-night, as you know. The steward is a chum of mine, and he has undertaken to stow you away for the five shillings.

He'll be here directly, and you can pay him, and he will take you down on board.'

I could scarcely repress a smile as the old rascal told me this glaring falsehood, for I felt that I must have acted my part exceedingly well, if he really believed I was such a simpleton as he assumed me to be. It was of course no part of my business to undeceive him yet. Presently a young man dressed like a ship's steward came in, and he and Levy entered into conversation, and in a little while Levy whispered to me that he would introduce me, but that I mustn't speak about the passage to Rotterdam there. The young man proved to be really the steward of a vessel leaving by that night's tide for Rotterdam, and Levy suggested that I ought to stand treat, which I consented to do.

In about half-an-hour the steward got up to go, and Levy whispered to me to give him the five shillings and he would hand it to the steward outside. I pretended to be very reluctant to do this, but at last, on his exclaiming—'What, can you not trust one of your own persuasion? Jew does not prey upon Jew,' I consented, and slipped the five shillings into his hand.

He came back in a few minutes saying—'That's all square, and you may thank me for doing a good thing for you. The steward says you are to go down in an hour. I'll take you down, and see that you are all right.'

Let it not be supposed for a moment that I had any idea the fellow had really made the arrangement he spoke of. Of course, even if he had, I should have found some excuse for not going on board; but the fact is I felt perfectly convinced he had not even

spoken to the steward, much less given him the five shillings. Nevertheless, I kept asking him if it was not time to go, and he as repeatedly answered no, he would see me all right.

About half-past ten he told me it was time now, and we both left the house, I feeling very curious to know how the fellow was going to get out of the scrape. He proved more artful than I even supposed, for when we got to the berth where the ship had been lying she had gone. Then Mr. Isaac Levy uttered an oath and broke in lamentations, calling down anything but blessings on the head of the steward, who, he said, had deceived him as to the time of starting.

I at once demanded my money back from Levy, but he protested he had not got it, and that the steward had deceived him. I pretended to be exceedingly angry, and said to him at last—

‘Mark my words, Isaac Levy, I will turn the tables on you before very long.’

He grinned, and answered that he was not at all afraid.

My little ruse had proved to me that he was an exceedingly cunning rascal, but I did not doubt but what I should be able to hook him, and to this end I prepared a little scheme in conjunction with two constables, one of whom had been a sailor, and the other had had a good deal to do with shipping. These two men, disguising themselves as sailors, were to scrape acquaintance with Isaac Levy, and hint that they had a little money, but were anxious to ship. They were to lead him on for a few days until a large foreign vessel that was expected came in. Then they were to keep an eye on Levy, and, if possible, get him and some of the sailors of the foreign vessel to adjourn to

a certain public-house at the foot of Leith Walk, and take them to a room upstairs, where drink would be called for. After a time I was to appear on the scene, also in the character of a sailor, and as a friend of the other two men. By this means we hoped to catch Levy in some act that would enable us to arrest him, and get him convicted.

Matters seemed to favour our little plan. The vessel duly arrived, and the crew were to be paid off in Leith. Levy lost no time in scraping acquaintance with some of the sailors, and inviting them to drink with him. Two of these men accompanied him to the house where I had been on the night that I gave him the five shillings. Soon after my two men appeared on the scene, and, of course, had no difficulty in joining the party. It soon became evident that one of the other two men, who were great chums, was pretty flush of money—that is, he had two or three pounds perhaps. At any rate, led on by the artful Jew, they began to drink, then my decoys suggested that they should adjourn to the house I have indicated. At first Levy offered some objection, possibly thinking that it would be better, if it could be done, to keep the fellow with the money away from the others. But, as all four were in favour of going, he had to give in. They had already by this time had four or five glasses of spirits, and had got into a reckless, lively condition.

The party now went to the house at the foot of Leith Walk, and more drink was ordered. My men had really taken little or nothing, but they pretended to be in a somewhat dazed state. Later on I arrived on the scene. I had some idea that Levy eyed me suspiciously, but if that was so, I succeeded in throwing him off his guard.

I said I had been indulging too much the day previous and had not been in bed all night, and consequently was very tired. I had an object in this, for it enabled me soon after to ensconce myself in a corner near the fire and pretend to fall asleep, but I need scarcely say I kept on the watch.

It was very evident that the two sailors had reached that stage when they had become utterly reckless, and if they had had fifty pounds they would have squandered it. But it was no part of Isaac Levy's business to let them go on spending any more of what little they had. It was the rascal's intention to possess himself of it as soon as possible. One of my men, as previously arranged, had let his head fall on the table, and was snoring; and the other seemed so far gone that it was scarcely worth while taking him into account.

'Well, boys, what do you say to another round?' suggested Levy to the sailors.

They expressed themselves as being in perfect accord with the idea, so the bell was rung and more whisky ordered in. When the waiter brought it, and after he had retired, I distinctly saw Levy take something from his waistcoat pocket, and drop it into the glasses of the two sailors. My man had in a stupified way refused to have any more, and the other man and I seemed to be so sound asleep that we were out of the reckoning. What it was that Levy took from his pocket I could not, of course, tell. It was his movement that indicated to me what he was doing. But that he had put something into the glasses of the sailors I felt perfectly sure, and that something I could not doubt was intended to utterly stupify them.

Some little time before this one of the men had in a

spirit of boastfulness taken from an inner pocket of his waistcoat a very old and worn pocket-book, and opening this he had displayed before the gloating eyes of the Jew four £1 notes and a curious foreign ring set with precious stones.

His companion had the sense to say to him—

‘Don’t be a fool, man. Put these things away again, and don’t show them to every one like that.’

He did ultimately restore the pocket-book to his pocket, but the Jew had seen its contents, and his cupidity was aroused.

About a quarter of an hour after the sailors had drunk their whisky the effect of whatever it was Levy had put into their drink became apparent. One slipped from his chair on to the floor, and the other fell half across the table.

With a hasty glance at the others the crafty Jew immediately began to rifle their pockets, and very soon he had the pocket-book out, and taking the notes and ring, he put these into his own pocket, and then replaced the book in the sailor’s pocket. His villainous act being accomplished, he was about to leave the room, when springing up I rushed forward, saying—

‘I told you, Mr. Levy, I would turn the tables on you before long.’

He seemed to totter on his feet, and his face became ashen in its paleness.

‘Who are you?’ he asked in a husky voice.

‘I was the supposed Jew whom you robbed of five shillings the other night. I am in reality Donovan the detective, and I am going to arrest you.’

‘You devil,’ he hissed. ‘Stand aside and let me pass or I’ll brain you.’

He suddenly produced from his coat pocket a small life preserver, but before he could use it he was, much to his astonishment, pinned from behind in a grip of iron that he could not shake off. My two men had sprung upon him, and in a few seconds another iron grip was on him, for I handcuffed him.

He saw that the game was up, and that resistance would be useless, and uttering a malediction on me he said—

‘I couldn’t have thought that I should have been so great a fool as to fall so easily into such a trap.’

Ringing the bell, I summoned the landlord, and explained matters to him, telling him that I should hold him responsible for the two drugged sailors. Then we conveyed our prisoner to the station, and I don’t think I ever saw a man look so utterly chapfallen as he did. The whole thing was such an unexpected blow to him that he hardly seemed able to realise it. The cunning with which he had hitherto pursued his nefarious calling had enabled him for a long time to set the law at defiance, but the sword of Justice had fallen at last. On searching him several small pilules were found in his waistcoat pocket, and these were proved to contain a powerful narcotic, which the villain was in the habit of using to stupify his victims. The fact, of course, told heavily against him at his trial, and the result was he was sent to prison for five years, and thus we got rid for a time of a most dangerous pest.

THE STORY OF A DIAMOND RING.

ONE morning about eleven o'clock a very stont, red-faced, bald-headed, well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking man bounced into the central Police Station in Glasgow, and with much puffing and blowing, for he was greatly excited, he said he had been robbed of a diamond ring valued at £200. I say that he 'bounced in,' and there is no other way to express it, for he was one of those fussy individuals who make themselves heard, felt, and seen, and who force themselves upon you with an obtrusiveness that is often ludicrous and wholly objectionable.

The Superintendent on duty, who was a cool, deliberate man, eyed the stranger, whose portly form was clothed in expensive garments. Across his expansive abdomen stretched a massive gold chain of the ship's cable pattern. In his cravat a handsome pin sparkled, and he had two or three rings on his fat fingers. Although a little loudly dressed, there was nothing flash about him. That is, his clothes and jewellery were good. It needed only half an eye to see that, and from his appearance and style there was no reason to suppose that he might not have been in possession of a ring of the value stated.

'Pray be seated, sir,' said the Superintendent politely. 'You are a little excited now.'

‘Excited?’ bawled the individual, and striking the desk with his ponderous first, ‘excited, what do you mean? I am not excited. I’m as cool as you are. But if I am excited, is there any wonder? Don’t you think you would be excited if you had lost a ring worth two hundred pounds?’

The Superintendent smiled as he answered—

‘Well, sir, I don’t know how I might feel, for I have never had the good luck to possess so valuable a piece of property. But be kind enough to give us some particulars of your loss. What is your name, sir?’

‘My name is Samuel Featherstone.’

‘You are a stranger to Glasgow, I venture to think?’

‘Well, I don’t live here if that’s what you mean, but I come here often enough. I’m a partner in the firm of Blank, Blank, and Co., of Wood Street, London, and I travel for the firm.’

‘Oh, yes. Then where are you staying now?’

‘At the —— Hotel.’

‘Were you robbed of the ring in the hotel or outside?’

‘In the hotel. There’s no doubt about it. I’ve been in the house for two days, and I had the ring all right last night.’

‘Then do you suspect any one?’

‘Yes, of course I do. I suspect the chambermaid.’

‘What are your reasons for suspecting her?’

‘Well, I’m sure it was her,’ said the gentleman, fuming and puffing again.

‘But have you any proof?’

‘I’ve got no actual proof, but I’m going to give her in charge anyway. She expressed admiration for the ring last night, and she’s the only person who has

had anything to do with my room. I'm as sure that she has taken it as I am that I have got a head on my shoulders.'

At this stage of the proceedings a message was sent to me, as I happened to be on the premises, and in a few minutes I was in the lower office, taking stock of this fat and fussy individual. The foregoing particulars were related to me, and, having listened to them, I said—

'Now, Mr. Featherstone, I would remind you that it is a very serious business to make such a charge against a person unless you have very good evidence to go upon, and you run some risk of an action for false imprisonment.'

'And pray, sir, who the deuce are you?' he demanded in a vulgar and blustering way.

'Oh, I am only a very humble person,' I replied, 'but I've had some little experience of cases of this kind, and it's taught me caution.'

The Superintendent mentioned my name, and Mr. Featherstone, with haughty demeanour, said that he had never heard of me, whereat I expressed deep regret that I was so unfortunate as not to be known to him.

'Well, that doesn't matter,' he answered, patronisingly. 'You know me, no doubt. Any way, you know my firm.'

I was compelled to confess that up to that moment it had not been my privilege to have heard of either him or his firm. Whereat he waxed wroth again, and cried out—

'Well, I wouldn't give much for your commercial knowledge. Why, my firm has been doing business with Glasgow for fifty years.'

'Possibly; and while deploring my supreme igno-

rance, I would venture to remark that I am not a commercial man but a detective, and have spent my life in hunting down criminals.'

'Oh, you are a detective. Well, look here, Mr. Donovan, just you take and get this ring back for me, and I'll give you a tenner.'

'I must decline your offer of reward,' I said, 'I am paid for doing my duty, and my best efforts will be directed towards recovering your property.'

'Well, a tenner is not to be sneezed at,' he observed. 'Anyway, you've got yourself to please. I want my ring back, and if you get it I shan't forget you. I've got plenty of money, and can be liberal with it, but, darn it, I don't like to be robbed of a halfpenny.'

'Quite so. Most men take the same view.'

'You see,' he went on, 'it's not so much the value of the ring I care about. But it was given to me by our employés.'

'That apart, two hundred pounds' worth of property is a serious loss, and cannot be viewed with indifference,' I said. 'But now coming to business, Mr. Featherstone, what are your reasons for suspecting the chambermaid?'

'I've already told you she is the only one who has had anything to do with my room. She was admiring the ring yesterday, and when I spoke to her about it this morning she went as red as a turkey cock.'

'But that is hardly proof of guilt.'

'Look here, sir,' he cried irascibly, 'I'm open to bet a thousand pounds that girl is the thief. Anyway I charge her with the theft, and am going to give her in charge. I'll take all the responsibility.'

'Very well,' I replied, with a shrug of the shoulders. 'But I had better go with you to the hotel.'

In a few minutes we were on our way there, and *en route* I ventured to ask my gentleman if he had been anywhere the night previous.

‘Yes; I dined with some friends,’ he answered.

Fixing my eyes on his rubicund countenance, I ventured to suggest the possibility of his having dined not wisely, but too well. Whereat he blustered up again, and vowed that all he had taken had been a few glasses of champagne, a little hock, some dry sherry, and a couple of whisky toddies after dinner.

‘Well,’ I remarked sententiously, ‘after all things are judged relatively, and what is a mere toothful to one man might send half-a-dozen others into the gutter.’

‘God bless my life!’ he exclaimed, ‘I’m one of the most temperate of men.’

‘Yes, so it seems—judged by some standards,’ I answered, but my point was lost upon him.

On arriving at the hotel I found that Mr. Featherstone was very well known there, having used the hotel for some years. The landlord was greatly troubled about the loss of the ring, for Mr. Featherstone was an exceedingly good customer; and, though an excitable and fussy man, he was not at all a bad fellow.

This information, of course, was given to me privately, and I ventured to ask the landlord if there was any reason to doubt that his customer had really been the possessor of so valuable a piece of jewellery.

‘Doubt, not a bit of it,’ replied the landlord a little hotly. ‘I know the ring well, and he’s a fellow with any amount of money, and fond of jewellery.’

‘Just so. Tell now about this girl he suspects.’

‘That’s Mary Matthews,’ and the landlord scratched

his head, and there was a puzzled expression in his face. 'I don't know what to think,' he added musingly.

'Do you suspect her?'

'I won't express any opinion,' he said decisively.

'Has she been with you long?'

'No, not very long, and she's under notice to leave.'

'Why?'

'Because she's too good-looking.'

'Umph! I understand.'

'Well, you see she is rather a silly-headed kind of lass, and you know you can't keep gentlemen in a house like this from talking to a pretty lass, and Mary Matthews is just one of the kind that are always giggling and carrying on, and I won't put up with it.'

'Ah, poor lass,' I remarked, sympathetically. 'And now will you be good enough to send for her?'

Mary was duly sent for, and in the meantime Mr. Featherstone had gone up to his room to have another look round. But with no result. He could not find his ring.

When Mary came into the room she looked frightened and nervous. She was about twenty-two years of age and remarkably pretty, and the sympathy I had felt for her before seeing her was increased now as she stood before me, for I knew that such a pretty girl in her station of life would need a good deal of mental balance to enable her to resist the many temptations that would come in her way.

'Good day, Mary,' I said gently in order to set her at her ease, as well as from a habit I had cultivated of always treating women, no matter how degraded, with a certain deference. For I liked to think that chivalry

was not quite dead, and that some small vestige of it was to be found in my composition. This is by the way, however, and I hope the reader will pardon the digression. 'You are aware, Mary,' I continued, 'that there has been a diamond ring lost in the house.'

'Yes, sir,' she answered, as she burst into tears, 'and Mr. Featherstone accuses me of stealing it. But I am as innocent as the baby unborn.'

'I think it was your duty to attend to his bedroom?'

'Yes.'

'Have you seen the ring?'

'Yes. He showed it to me, and asked me if I would like to have a ring like it. He said it was worth two hundred pounds, and I said if I had so much as that I should think I had a fortune.'

Although I should not have said so then, for I was always careful not to express an opinion to an accused person at such a time, I may state now that, after this brief conversation with Mary, I felt perfectly convinced of her innocence. Her manner was unmistakably that of an innocent person.

At this stage Mr. Featherstone burst into the room, and seeing Mary standing there like Niobe, all tears, he exclaimed—

'Well, young woman, what have you got to say for yourself now? Come, you had better make a clean breast of it.'

'Oh, you villain,' she sobbed out with passionate energy. 'How dare you say that I have got your ring?'

'I dare say it, because I know you took it.'

'Excuse me,' I interposed, 'but you had better leave this matter in my hands.'

'Well, look here, Donovan,' he said with vulgar

familiarity, 'just ask her if she did not say she would like to have the ring.'

Mary spoke up for herself before I could reply, and she exclaimed with fiery indignation—

'He was talking a lot of nonsense to me yesterday, and asking me if I would like to be his wife, and two or three times he struggled with me, and tried to kiss me, but I would not let him.'

'I just larked a bit with you; that was all,' put in Mr. Featherstone somewhat sheepishly.

'When he came in last night,' Mary went on, 'he was muddled with drink, and when I went to his room to light his gas he tried to kiss me again, but I just fought him, and wouldn't let him.'

'When did he complain of losing his ring?' I asked.

'This forenoon, after he came up from breakfast. He had left some rings and other things on the table, and I was in the room making the bed when he came in. He couldn't find his diamond ring, and he turned round and said—"Look her, where's that diamond ring?" "What do I know about your ring?" I answered.'

'When I told you you had taken the ring didn't you go red in the face?' asked Mr. Featherstone in his excitable way.

'I daresay I did,' she answered indignantly. 'And so would you if anyone suddenly accused you of stealing.'

'Well, my lass,' he remarked with objectionable self-assurance, 'you can't get over me whatever you may do with Donovan here. You've taken that ring, I'll bet a thousand on it.'

'Oh, you beast,' she hissed, as her indignation got the better of her,

‘Hush,’ I said. ‘You had better not use harsh names.’ Then, turning to Mr. Featherstone, I asked—

‘Do you still persist in your charge, sir?’

‘Undoubtedly I do.’

‘I would caution you that this is a serious matter, and if the girl is proved not to have stolen your ring you may get into trouble.’

‘I know what I’m about,’ he answered. ‘You do your duty, that’s all you’ve got to do.’

‘Very well,’ I replied. ‘I know my duty, and will do it. But I understand you to say that you are willing to bet a thousand pounds on the girl’s guilt?’

‘Yes, I am.’

‘Suppose she turns out to be innocent, would you give her the thousand pounds?’

‘Yes, I’m hanged if I wouldn’t,’ he answered with, as I thought, a good deal of bounce.

I turned to Mary, and, addressing her quietly, said—

‘Well, Mary, my lass, you will have to go to the station with me.’

She burst into hysterical sobs at this announcement, and protested that she was an honourable and honest girl, and that it would break her father and mother’s heart if they knew she had gone to prison.

I soothed her as well as I could, and promised that I would sift the matter to the very bottom; and I told her that if it was proved that she had not taken the ring I would see that she was well compensated for the wrong done to her.

Mr. Featherstone sneered at this, and said I had no business to say such a thing. I remarked that I was master of my own speech, and if he was of opinion that I had exceeded my duty in any way he could report me to head-quarters. With this parting shot I told

Mary to put on her things and come with me, and that I would take her to the station in a cab, and nobody in the street would be any the wiser. The poor girl seemed very grateful, and though sobbing bitterly she did as I told her, and I drove her down to the Central, Mr. Featherstone following in another cab in order that he might prefer the charge.

The formalities having been gone through, the girl was told that if she could find any one who would be caution for her, or as they say in the south, give bail, she would be let out, but with broken-hearted sobs she replied that she knew nobody who could do that, and so she was locked up.

My interest in Mary Matthews had been thoroughly aroused, no less my disgust for the obtrusive and vulgar Featherstone, and I was resolved to leave no stone unturned to get at the truth. My first step was to ascertain something about her antecedents, and I found that her parents, though humble and poor, were highly respectable people, and when they heard of their daughter's disgrace they were overwhelmed with sorrow. I could find no one who had a single ill word to say against Mary, unless it was that she had been somewhat of a flirt. But I was not surprised at that. A pretty girl such as she was, and in her station of life, would be sure to have plenty of admirers, and it was only human nature—at any rate, woman's nature—to feel flattered at this homage to beauty, and she could hardly resist flirting, as it is called. But though Mary had been guilty of this weakness, I learned that there was a serious engagement between her and a young man named Horace Mollison, by trade a joiner. This young fellow bore a most excellent character as a steady, persevering fellow, and a good workman. He had been

trying for a long time to get sufficient money to furnish a house, and then he was going to marry Mary.

When he was told that his sweetheart had been arrested on a charge of theft he seemed terribly cut up, and much exercised in his mind as to whether to believe her guilty or not.

I next turned my attention to Mr. Featherstone. I ascertained that he bore the character of being an impulsive man, and a strictly honourable one. He was a married man, with a family of four children, and was exceedingly well off. He was a worshipper of the flesh pots of Egypt, and ministered in every way to his carnal pleasures. He was a free liver and fond of dining well; and though sometimes he got merry, as the saying is, he was considered on the whole a sober man, and never took anything during business hours.

On the night that he lost his ring he had dined with some friends, and I was careful to inquire of them if they had noticed his diamond ring on his finger, and they were positive that they had. I then traced his movements after he had left his friends, which he did about eleven o'clock, and I found that he went straight to his hotel and had a glass of toddy with the landlord in the latter's private room.

'Had he his ring on his finger then?' I asked the landlord.

'I cannot express a positive opinion, but I am almost sure he had. I had seen the ring so often that of course it did not attract my attention as otherwise it might have done. Particularly as he had other rings on his fingers.'

This narrowed the inquiry down to a small margin, because, if the landlord's supposition was right, Mr. Featherstone must have lost the ring in the house,

He himself was perfectly positive he had the ring when he came in. He would not even qualify this by saying it was within the bounds of possibility that he might not have had it. He was *positive* that he had.

‘Now, tell me, Mr. Featherstone,’ I asked, ‘do you go to bed with your rings on your fingers?’

‘No. I always take them off, because my hands swell a little at nighttime.’

‘The hands of stout people generally do,’ I said. ‘But as you are so positive about having the ring on when you came in, perhaps you can as positively state that you remember taking it off?’

‘I be hanged if I can,’ he exclaimed frankly, which impressed me more in his favour, ‘but I think I took all my rings off and put them on the dressing-table.’

‘Did you notice them in the morning when you got up?’

‘No. I went downstairs to the breakfast-room leaving my things on the table.’

‘You were absent-minded, perhaps?’

‘Yes, a little.’

‘Ah! You had dined well the night previously, I remarked ironically.

‘Oh, well, if you like to put it that way,’ he answered snappishly. ‘I daresay it had something to do with it.’

‘Then it was when you came up from the breakfast room that you missed your ring?’

‘It was.’

‘Did the ring fit tightly on your finger?’

‘No; not very.’

‘Would it slip off easily?’

‘Well, no; not unless my hands were soapy?’

‘Just so; do you wash your hands with your rings on?’

‘Not as a rule.’

‘Perhaps you do when you’ve dined well?’ I suggested.

‘Look here, what the deuce are you driving at?’ he asked gruffly.

‘I want to find out whether you washed your hands last night with your rings on?’

I saw that this question caused a changed expression in his face, as though a new idea had struck him, and an idea too that caused him some trouble.

‘Now that you mention it,’ he answered, ‘I believe that I did.’

‘Where?’

‘In the lavatory.’

‘Then it will be my duty to have the drains of the lavatory searched,’ I observed.

‘By all means,’ he said; ‘but I think you will have your trouble for nothing.’

The lavatory, which was only a small place, was fitted with the tilting basins—then a comparatively new invention. There were only two of these basins in the room, and I lost no time in obtaining the services of a plumber. I need scarcely tell the readers that drains of this kind are trapped by a syphon, or more properly speaking a bend like the letter U in the pipe. Anything heavy, like a ring for instance, would be apt to stick in this bend, and my hope was that if Mr. Featherstone had lost his ring when washing his hands it would be found. The first pipe we opened to search was fruitless, but in the second my hopes were realised, and the missing ring was found. I was overjoyed at this for Mary’s sake, and I felt

also it would teach Mr. Featherstone a much-needed lesson.

He was not in at the time the ring was found, as he had some business appointments to attend to, and I did not see him until the afternoon. He received the announcement in blank amazement, and bit his lips in vexatiousness of spirit at his own stupidity.

‘For God’s sake,’ he cried, ‘go and get the girl out of prison.’

‘Oh, yes,’ I answered, ‘she’ll come out of prison, but you know you bet a thousand pounds on her guilt, and although nobody took your bet you’ve morally lost it.’

I lost no time in securing Mary’s release. She had then been locked up for three days. Mr. Featherstone came to me in great distress of mind; his bumptiousness had left him, and he was ready to eat humble pie.

‘Look here,’ he said, ‘this matter must be hushed up. I wouldn’t for the world it got to my people’s ears. Now tell me what ought I to give the girl?’

‘Nothing less than the thousand,’ I answered, ‘that you were ready to stake on her guilt.’

‘By heaven, I’ll do it,’ he exclaimed, much to my surprise, and he kept his word.

He made me her trustee, and placed a thousand pounds in a bank, empowering me to hand it to her when she was married.

Mr. Featherstone thus proved that, although in some respects a fool, he was at least an honourable man.

Two months later I had the satisfaction of attend-

ing Mary's wedding with Horace Mollison, and of handing her as a dowry a cheque for a thousand pounds. The young couple flourished and prospered, and the last I heard of them was that they were considered to be well off, for the husband was steady and saving.

A STRANGE CASE.

ONE of the most startling phases in connection with life in a large city is the ease with which a person may entirely disappear from the ken of his fellows without leaving a trace behind him. On the first blush, it might seem that in a Metropolis like London, for instance, it would be almost impossible for anyone to remain long undiscovered when once a search for him had begun. But experience has proved that it is the easiest thing in the world, or at any rate one of the easiest, and nothing could testify more strongly to the fact so often urged by moralists and reasoners that every individual lives in a world of his own, which may suddenly get out of the orbit of his fellows, and, though it may be missed, it may never be found again.

The foregoing remarks are *àpropos* to a very remarkable and sensationally romantic case which I had to deal with in London some years ago, many of the incidents of which will no doubt still be remembered by the public. The oft-quoted aphorism that truth is stranger than fiction has seldom been exemplified in a more forcible manner than in this true romance, which, had it been invented by some enterprising and bold-thinking novel writer, would have been pooh-poohed as a ridiculous exaggeration. Those, however,

who are keen to criticise the dramatic situations of the fictionist should remember that there is hardly anything that can be imagined but has had its counterpart in real life.

Supposing now that a novel writer had imagined such a thing as the following:—A man is tied, held forcibly in a chair, then a long, very fine needle, like a knitting needle but almost as thin as a bristle, is slowly and deliberately passed through the centre of one of his eyeballs into the brain; death instantly ensues; the victim is left sitting in the chair, is so found, and his death at first attributed to apoplexy. A keen-sighted doctor, however, notices a peculiarity about one of the eyes of the dead man, and is induced to make a more minute examination. The result of this is that suspicions are aroused, an autopsy held, and it is demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that a long needle has been driven into the brain; and, to doubly confirm this, the needle is subsequently found in the passage of the house where the murder was committed. It had evidently been dropped by the murderer in his haste. This remarkable murder is not fiction but stern fact, and occurred quite recently. The victim was a prominent Fenian named Gallagher, resident in Chicago. The infamous gang of secret conspirators, known as the Clan-na-Gael, suspected him of being a spy in the pay of the British Government. He was consequently lured to a house in a quiet suburb, and killed in the way I have stated, and which has been duly recorded by the Chicago police. This crime, which is worthy of the Spanish Inquisition, was committed in the year of grace, 1889, and in a highly civilised centre of America. The murderers, it is sad to say, have not yet been arrested, and probably never

will be. I have ventured on this digression to show that the facts of real life very frequently put the art of imagination into the shade.

But to my story. At the time I am dealing with there was a prosperous and highly respected citizen of London, whom I will call Smith. That, however, is a fictitious name, for obvious reasons. Mr. Smith was a self-made man. He began life as a cabinet-maker, and by steady perseverance and unswerving application he created an enormous general furnishing business in the west end of London, and grew proportionately wealthy. He had three daughters and one son, and it is with the latter we have to deal. Mr. Smith's children of course had very much greater advantages than he himself had had, for he had already become rich when they were born, and so was enabled to surround them with comfort and luxury, such as he had never known in his youth, and give them good education into the bargain. The son, Robert Smith, was sent to one of the great public schools, and from there he went to Christ Church, Oxford; and though displaying a fair amount of intellectual ability, he did not distinguish himself in any particular way, unless it was as a rather fast young man who squandered money with the most lavish hand, the money, of course, being supplied by a too indulgent father. He had the double misfortune of being an only son and very good looking, and his parents, blind to his weaknesses, doted upon him.

At the age of twenty-one this promising young gentleman closed his college career, leaving behind him a reputation for having been 'a jolly good fellow.' This opinion was, of course, principally held by those who gauged a man's goodness by the amount of money

he spent, and the number of cigars and bottles of wine he consumed in a week. It was not a very high standard perhaps, but it suited the class amidst which young Smith moved. On leaving college he travelled abroad for about a year, and then settled down to assist his father in his huge business. About three years later he became engaged to a young lady, the daughter of the head partner in an eminent firm of music publishers. The match seemed in every way a suitable one, and there was every reason to believe that the young couple were warmly attached to each other. They were equal in social status, and as they were to be liberally endowed with money by their parents, they seemed to be favourites of fortune, and to have happiness before them.

The marriage was arranged to take place in November, and after the ceremony the newly-married pair were to start for the Riviera to spend their honeymoon. There is many a slip, however, betwixt the cup and the lip, and the adage was to be verified in this case. The night before the day fixed for the marriage Mr. Robert Smith left his home, intending, as he informed his parents, to call upon his bride-elect in accordance with an appointment he had made with her, and he stated that he would be home early, as some young men were coming to play billiards with him for the last time in his bachelor days. He seemed in high spirits, and was apparently perfectly happy.

It was an atrocious night. A thick fog hung over the Metropolis, and a drizzling rain fell with maddening persistency. Soon after nine o'clock, the hour appointed by young Smith to meet his friends, they arrived at his father's house, and Mr. Smith, senior, received them, saying that he expected his son back

every minute. When ten o'clock had struck Robert was still absent. This caused no uneasiness, for, as Mr. Smith put it, 'you must forgive a lover lingering with his lady love. She has more attraction for him at present than we have.'

Mr. Smith and the friends consequently played billiards together, and at eleven o'clock they sat down to supper, but Robert was still absent. The supper party were very merry, and cracked jokes at Robert's expense. At midnight the friends left without seeing Robert, and, as it was no unusual thing for him to remain away until after midnight, his parents retired to rest. His sisters had gone to their rooms at ten o'clock as they were to be up early in the morning in order to take part in the great event of their brother's marriage.

When the time came for Robert to make his appearance in the morning he was still absent; and then it was discovered, to the consternation of his people, that his bed had not been slept in. What did this mean? It certainly seemed to point to something being wrong. A servant was at once despatched post haste to the house of the bride-elect, which was about a mile away, to inquire if the young man was there, or at what time he left. But imagine the alarm and horror of all concerned, when it was ascertained that Robert Smith had not been at the house at all on the preceding night. At first the news was so startling that it could hardly be credited, but further inquiry only served to corroborate it; and what was more, Robert had not made any appointment to see the young lady on that night, but, as a matter of fact, had told her that, being his last night as a bachelor, he had invited a few friends to his father's house to supper,

consequently he would not be able to get away. His statement, therefore, to his parents that he *had* made an arrangement to see his sweetheart was an absolute falsehood, deliberately told. The excitement and alarm in both families increased as the hour for the wedding drew near, and the bridegroom was still absent. There was nothing in his room to show that he had meditated remaining away. He had taken no clothes with him but what he wore. On his dressing table were several small articles of jewellery, such as a set of diamond studs, two or three rings, some sleeve links, and a pin. Moreover it was known that he had not much money with him. He had a private banking account of his own, but just before going out he said to his father—

‘Dad, just lend me ten pounds; I want to buy something. I will give you a cheque when I come back, but I have left my cheque-book upstairs.’

Of course his father handed him the money, and with the remark that he would not be late, Master Robert, who was described as being ‘as lively as a cricket then,’ went out, and from that moment all trace of him was lost. As a wedding cannot very well take place without a bridegroom, and as Mr. Robert Smith had not turned up at the hour appointed for his marriage, it had of necessity to be postponed. Both families were in a state of the wildest alarm, and the bride was inconsolable, while the disappointment of the guests as they assembled cannot be described.

Of course, the friends did not sit with folded hands in the presence of this mystery, but used every possible endeavour to try and find out where the truant was. Naturally, at first there was great reluctance to let the matter leak out and become public, though it was impossible to keep it private long, for information was

given to the police in the course of the day, but still the night came and brought no tidings of the missing man. His parents and sisters were distracted, and his bride-elect almost wept herself blind. But neither tears nor grief were of any avail, and the following day, and the next day, and the day after that, the mystery was as great a mystery as ever. If young Mr. Robert Smith had dissolved himself into thin air, he could not have more effectually disappeared.

By this time, of course, the papers had got hold of the affair, and as such a sensational morsel was too good for a mere paragraph in an obscure corner, it was given the benefit of leaded type and full cap. heading, announcing the—

MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF A BRIDEGROOM.

One paper, which was ill informed, ventured to suggest that suicide was the theory of the disappearance. But there was not a person who knew Robert but what scouted that idea. He was a singularly cheerful-dispositioned young man, without, so far as was known, a serious care in the world. Money matters could have caused him no trouble, because his own balance at the bankers was reckoned by thousands, and had he wanted thousands more he had only to ask his father for it. He was on the best of terms with all his friends, and it was known that he was devotedly attached to the young lady who was to be his wife. What then had caused his disappearance? No one believed in suicide; had an accident befallen him it must have become known by this time. His friends, therefore, were driven to suppose that he had met with foul play. When a week had passed, and

nothing whatever had been ascertained that was likely to lead to a solution of the mystery, my services were enlisted, and all the foregoing particulars were related to me, and when I had learned the story, I at once put aside the theory of murder, though I did not give my reasons for so doing at the time, for I was anxious not to add a pang to those his friends and relatives had been called upon to endure. But my reasons were such that no one capable of logical argument could have failed to respect. They were these—the young man had, with some deep design, told his parents a deliberate falsehood. He had stated that he was going to see his future wife, but he had no appointment with her, and in fact had previously informed her that on that particular night he was going to entertain some friends at his father's house. In practising this little bit of deceit he was clearly actuated by some set purpose. What that purpose was I did not pretend to be able to form any theory about at that early stage. As the deception was unmistakable, I at once put from my mind all idea of murder. It was more easy, however, to believe in suicide in spite of the seeming high spirits and perfect happiness of young Smith. The vagaries of a person of suicidal tendencies are remarkable. But then it will be asked, why should I have been of opinion that a young man so exceptionally well situated as this one, and on the very eve of a marriage that seemed so promising, would have committed suicide? My answer to this is that I saw the probability of some rankling sin having driven him to desperation. There are some people so peculiarly constituted that they are capable of masking with laughter and well-assumed joy the skeleton that is goading them to madness. Let it be

clearly understood that I do not say that I was positively of opinion the young man had destroyed himself. What I want the reader to understand is that while his friends deemed suicide out of the question and murder highly probable, I just reversed this, and the process of reasoning which enabled me to arrive at this conclusion I have already stated.

At the same time, in the absence of a more perfect knowledge of the young man's habits and his past history, I was not disposed to come to anything like a decision in my own mind, and I felt that, in order to get a clue, it was desirable I should know something about him from sources other than his own friends, for friends are never good witnesses in such matters. I therefore proceeded to ascertain some particulars of his college career, and of what connections he had formed after leaving Oxford. I found that he had been very reckless and foolish at college, and bore the reputation of being a man that you could never get to the bottom of. This, as will at once be seen, tended to confirm my suspicions that, under his jovial exterior, was concealed some trouble that found its vent as the eve of his marriage came, and so had driven him to that awful act which men take who have made their own lives such a curse that it has more horror for them than death.

For many days I used all my humble abilities to try and unravel the mystery, but without avail. I was somewhat thwarted in my efforts by his relatives, who would not give me permission to examine his papers. This opposition arose from the notion his parents persisted in entertaining that their son had been murdered, and that under such circumstances no good purpose could be served by his private affairs being

inquired into by a stranger. But this murder theory was to my mind utterly untenable, because the man had wilfully lied with a fixed purpose, and that lying had some connection with his disappearance. On the other hand, regarding suicide as not improbable, I directed my attention to the discovery of his body; and it is an axiom in the police service that a living man may be more easily hidden away than a dead body. I therefore felt pretty sure that if he had destroyed himself his remains would be discovered, more particularly as a large reward was offered for him dead or alive. But when a fortnight had passed, I entirely abandoned the suicide idea, and I came to the conclusion that he was living, though I frankly confess I was greatly puzzled, for, from the moment of his leaving his father's house, every trace of him was lost. Whether he went east, west, north, or south, after that there was nothing to show.

As I did not consider that I had exhausted all the means that might give me a clue, I was reluctant to abandon the case, particularly as it began to dawn on me that he was the victim of a conspiracy. His parents and his intended wife were in a state bordering on frenzy by this time, and so I determined to be blunt with his father, and said to him—

‘The fact is, Mr. Smith, you are placing obstacles in the way of solving this mystery. My impression is the key to the solution is to be found amongst his private papers, and unless you allow me unimpeded action in the matter I must ask you to place the affair in some one else's hands. Even if your idea about his having been murdered is correct, we may still find a clue to the crime from his own documents, and in the interest of justice you should leave no stone unturned

to clear up the mystery which has caused a sensation throughout the land.'

My arguments did not altogether convince Mr. Smith, but nevertheless he yielded a reluctant consent; more perhaps because he was urged thereto by his daughters, who had a profound belief in their brother's immaculateness, and so I was allowed at last to go behind the scenes of young Robert Smith's life. The number of letters and papers he had accumulated led me to hope that some of them would reveal to me the clue I sought, but in this I was disappointed, and I began to think that the mystery was deepening. In a little snugger, which he had had fitted up as a library and smoking-room for his own private use, was one of the old-fashioned writing-desks that folded up in halves, and so are locked. This was rather a large rosewood desk. It was locked, and, being fitted with a good lock, a key could not be got to suit it, and so I requested Mr. Smith to allow me to break the desk open. My request was granted, and almost the first thing I came across was a photograph of a pretty girl, about twenty years of age, with a child about two years old in her lap. The photographer's name was on the back of the carte, the address was in Oxford; and I immediately came to the conclusion that it was my duty to ascertain something about this pretty young woman. The rest of the contents of the desk did not reveal anything likely to be of use, though they served to show that young Robert had been a consummate flirt, and had corresponded with a number of young ladies.

As I was about to close the desk, I took up a sheet of blotting-paper that was lying on it, and held it up to the light. The paper had only been used once or

twice, and there was the impression of some written words on it. By critically examining it I managed to decipher these words, and as I had seen several specimens of Robert's handwriting, I knew that the words were from his pen—. Decided . meet . last time . . some arrangement with . . distinctly understand gulf between nothing . . bridge . . . indifferent alike . . . threats . . tears.

'Now,' thought I, as I pocketed that sheet of blotting-paper and the photograph, 'I have got the key to the mystery.'

I should have considered myself very stupid, or, for the matter of that, I should have considered any one else with the least spark of intelligence stupid, had he failed to connect the photograph of that pretty girl nursing the baby with the words on the blotting-paper. Very little examination showed me that the letter had been hastily and even excitedly written, and the blanks between the words represented parts where the letters had not been impressed, or the ink had so spread as to leave only a meaningless smudge.

It may be asked—How did I know that the letter had been excitedly written? I knew it in this way. I put the blotting-paper under the microscope, and I noticed that some of the strokes were wavy, indicating a trembling hand such as belongs to old age, but which is unusual in the young unless the writer's nerves have been unsteadied. Then, again, there were long straggling tails and horns to the letters, and several splutters caused by the pen sticking in the paper. All these things clearly pointed to great haste, and were evidence also of the state of mind of the writer at the time he penned his communication. There was no date or address that I could discover, and no signature.

The absence of address was accounted for by the supposition that he had written on his own note-paper, which bore his monogram and embossed address. The date and signature had probably been left out purposely. That he had written on his own note-paper seemed to me likely enough, because the width of the lines on the blotting-pad were the same as the note-paper. My next step was to expand the skeletonised letter, and this is what I made of it:—

‘I have decided to meet you for the last time, and make some arrangement with you. But let it be distinctly understood that there is a gulf between us which nothing can bridge, and I am indifferent alike to your threats and tears.’

This version, of course, might not be altogether correct, but, at any rate, the words on the blotting-pad were so suggestive that it was easy to fill up the blanks, so as to get the substance of the communication.

Having nothing but theory for the time being to go upon, I considered it prudent to keep my discovery from Robert Smith’s father. I merely said that I had got a possible clue, but until I had followed it up and proved it right or wrong, I thought it better not to say anything about it. As I have already said, the back of the photograph of the young lady bore the name of the photographer and the address in Oxford. Now a person could hardly have been photographed in Oxford unless present there, so my plan was to proceed direct to the photographer and institute inquiries. I found that he had the largest establishment in the town and a very extensive business, and kept a number of assistants. Unfortunately, owing to the magnitude of his connection, he could not identify the

lady of the photograph, but the number on the carte enabled him to say that the photograph must have been taken at least a year.

Of course I was disappointed at the result of my inquiries, but by no means disheartened, and I made up my mind that if the original of the photograph was living I would find her. It naturally occurred to me that if this pretty girl had been a sweetheart of Master Robert Smith's—and was it not a logical conclusion to come to, that she had been?—some of his old college companions would be aware of the fact, for a young man at school or college generally has a confidant, and though young men do not talk so much about their calf-love affairs as girls do, they do not altogether keep them secret.

On proceeding to the college it seemed at first as if another disappointment was in store for me, as none of the young gentlemen there could give me any information. But as I was leaving I got into conversation with the worthy and respected janitor who had passed a quarter of a century at his post, and was not only a well-informed man, as became one who dwelt within those classic precincts, but was a man of observation.

He had, of course, learned from the papers of Robert Smith's disappearance, and so the subject was one that we fell to discussing as a matter of course. I informed him that my name was Dick Donovan, that I was a detective employed by the family to solve the mystery if possible. I found that I was not unknown to him by reputation, and he was good enough to give expression to certain complimentary phrases which my modesty compels me to withhold. During our conversation he remarked—

‘Well, you know, Mr. Donovan, the fact is young Master Smith was just as deep as a well—and I mean a pretty deep well too. And in this particular instance, though truth is said to lie at the bottom of a well, your search for it in the Smithsonian Well would not always have been rewarded.’

This estimate of the young man’s character, so epigrammatically pronounced by the worthy janitor, quite coincided with my own theory about him, for he had deliberately misled his bride-elect as well as his parents. And it was obvious from all I had learned, that he was quite capable of concealing his thoughts, as also of assuming a dual character, as the exigencies of his career demanded.

‘Had he no very intimate companion amongst his college friends?’ I asked.

‘Yes. He and young Mr. Fred Morrison, son of Morrison the M.P., were very thick. They were like two flies stuck together with treacle; they seemed inseparable.’

‘And is young Mr. Fred here now?’ I asked.

‘No. He left last term.’

Mr. Morrison, the M.P., lived at Torquay, but had a London house, and on inquiry at the latter place I ascertained that Frederick was at Torquay with his mother and sisters. To that delightful southern beautyspot I posted, and secured an interview with the young man. I found him intelligent and thoughtful, and in answer to my inquiries he told me that he had been much pained by reading of his friend’s disappearance. ‘But,’ he added, ‘I am really not surprised, for he was a most erratic fellow.’

‘Was he frank and open?’

‘Well—there was nothing particular vicious about

him ; in fact, in many respects, he was a most charming young man ; but Bob was about as good and original an excuse maker as I have ever known, if he thought an excuse necessary. He could conceal his thoughts, too, excellently well.'

'You, however, were very intimate with him ?'

'Yes.'

'Do you know that young lady ?' I asked as I produced the photograph.

A strange expression came into Mr. Morrison's face. It was first of all a smile, then it changed to pained seriousness as he answered—

'Yes, that is a photo of Miss Hilda Simpson, the daughter of a publican. Her father keeps the Sun Hotel at H——, about five miles from Oxford.'

'Was young Smith in love with her ?'

'Well, he never actually told me so, but I know that he used to meet her clandestinely sometimes. I know that she was a very quiet, respectable sort of girl, and very pretty. The photograph does not do her justice.'

'Do you think now she has had anything to do with Robert's disappearance ?'

'Upon my word I cannot say. The mystery is a greater mystery to me than ever.'

My next step was to return to Oxford and seek an interview with the young lady's parents. I found them to be highly respectable tradespeople, but they were broken-hearted about their daughter, and greatly incensed at what they termed 'the disgrace she had brought upon her family.' Miss Hilda Simpson was the mother of a son, then about two years old ; but her parents solemnly assured me that they had no knowledge of the father. Hilda had refused any in-

formation, and as the unfortunate circumstance had caused a rupture between her and her parents, she had gone away, and they had heard nothing about her for a long time. The last they did hear was that she was in London.

Mr. Simpson, as he related the foregoing particulars to me, was deeply moved. He said that Hilda was his favourite daughter. She was one of four, and there were two sons. As these people had a keen regard for their reputation and respectability, they had taken the affair much to heart, and the mother especially vowed that she would never see her daughter again. After this interview I felt more than ever puzzled. Had it not been for the letter, I should have been disposed to think that young Smith had at the last moment relented and gone off with Hilda. But there were many reasons for not taking that view. Firstly, he had come within a few hours of his marriage with another lady. Secondly, when he went out on the night he disappeared he evidently did not intend to remain away, because he took none of his things, and had even left his cheque book behind him. Of course, he could have applied to the bank for another cheque book, but we ascertained that he had not done so, and had not drawn upon his account, which was between three and four thousand pounds. On the face of it, therefore, it was absurd to suppose that he premeditated flight when he went away, otherwise why did he borrow ten pounds from his father? Then, again, there was the letter. Now, what did that point to? Unmistakably it was an answer to one he had received from some one. That some one a woman, because he spoke of 'threats and tears.' He would not have used the word tears in writing to a man. Granted

then that he was writing to a woman, what more reasonable to suppose than that the woman was Miss Hilda Simpson? And now this question forced itself upon me. 'Has Hilda Simpson murdered Robert Smith?' Wronged women have been known to do desperate things, I argued, and in my mind there was no longer a doubt that young Smith *had* wronged Hilda, and was it not likely that, driven to madness by his perfidy in choosing another lady for his wife, she had revenged herself upon him by killing him?

I am bound to say that I did not entertain this view very long, because I found it would not bear logical examination. The murder to have been so long concealed—four weeks had now passed since the young man's disappearance—must have been deliberately planned and every detail of it settled beforehand. Granted that, and I should at once have had to admit that Hilda Simpson was a cold-blooded and abandoned wretch. Whereas, all I had learned about her tended to prove her a very gentle, confiding, and affectionate girl, utterly incapable of so desperate a deed as that of slaying her false lover. That she had had something to do with his disappearance seemed to me highly probable; for, supposing that he had seen her on the night of his disappearance and had left her to go to his home, when his disappearance became known, she surely would not have kept silent. For weeks the papers had been full of this 'Mysterious Disappearance,' and yet Hilda had made no sign, and all attempts to trace her had proved fruitless. This seemed to me to admit of but one inference—that inference was that she had been a *particeps criminis*.

Assuming that my inference was correct, it became necessary to suggest some theory for his disappear-

ance other than murder; and the only other thing that could suggest itself was *forcible detention*. Had he been taken suddenly ill and conveyed to a hospital we should have found it out, for, apart from the advertisements offering a large reward for his recovery, we had made inquiries at most of the hospitals without result. Had he by any possible chance been in prison, his discovery would have been still easier than finding him in a hospital. Of course, he might have been conveyed out of the country, but to admit that as a tenable theory was to presuppose an organisation, in which several people must have been concerned, and I confess that it seemed to me a singularly unlikely thing, not impossible, nor even improbable, but still unlikely, although that seems somewhat of a contradiction in terms. But the fact is, to convey a person out of the country against his will and leave no trace behind is an exceedingly difficult thing. Up to this time I had not told either family of my discovery in regard to Hilda, but as the weeks sped on, and Robert's disappearance was as much a mystery as ever, his own people and those of the bride-elect mourned him as one dead, and the Smiths even talked of going into mourning. I felt then that the time had come when my information ought to be imparted to his friends, at any rate to his parents, and so I broke the news as delicately as I could.

It can readily be supposed that this was a thunderbolt to them, and Mr. Smith's indignation knew no bounds, for his own career had been without blemish, and though he was a self-made man, it was his pride to keep his honour unstained, and that a son of his should have dragged that honour into the mire seemed to him almost incredible.

When he had somewhat recovered from the shock he informed me that he could not rest unless he had laid the whole matter before the parents of the young lady who was to have been Robert's wife. They were no less indignant than his own parents, and her father declared that, if this story about Robert was proved to be correct, the engagement between the young people would be at an end. I saw clearly enough that the young lady's father considered the story of Hilda sufficient to account for Robert's disappearance, although he could suggest nothing that seemed a feasible cause for the young man's long absence. Mr. Smith, on the other hand, while finding it hard to discredit the story in face of the evidence I brought forward, was strongly of opinion that it pointed more clearly to his son's death. Robert had, in fact, according to Mr. Smith, been foully murdered and his body so cleverly disposed of as to leave no trace behind. He pondered over this until it became a conviction, and he talked of offering a reward of five thousand pounds for information that would lead to the discovery of his murderers. I strongly opposed this course, although I really felt utterly baffled, until, as I sat one night reflectively inhaling the smoke of some choice cavendish, an inspiration came upon me, and I literally exclaimed—'Eureka!'

The cause of this exclamation on my part was a firm belief that I had at last hit upon the correct solution of this vexing problem. It flashed upon me, so to speak, and since I had rejected the idea of murder or suicide, and as young Smith was neither confined in a hospital nor a prison, it seemed to me that there was only one other place where he was likely to be detained, and that was a lunatic asylum.

The more I turned this over in my mind the more did it present itself to me as a perfectly feasible thing, for a person might be conveyed to a lunatic asylum with his appearance so altered as to render his identity a matter of extreme difficulty. And if he had been placed in the asylum under another name, no one connected with the place would be likely to suppose he was the same person as the one alluded to in the newspaper reports and the advertisements. The reason, therefore, why he had not been discovered was easy of explanation.

Of course, if my theory about his being in an asylum was correct, it implied a conspiracy, but that seemed to me to make it all the more likely that I was right. A conspiracy might involve several people, but I saw clearly that several people might have a direct interest in putting this young man away, and the chief of them would be the young woman he had betrayed. She, exasperated beyond endurance by the announcement of his marriage, had hit upon this means of preventing the marriage. It was a daring and dangerous scheme, assuming it true, but what will a wronged woman not do? This theory certainly did seem to me more feasible than his being taken out of the country.

It was too late for me to take any steps that night, but I thought so much about the matter that I slept but little, and as soon as possible in the morning I went round to Mr. Smith's house in order to calm him by saying that I had some reason to think I should get upon the track of his son. The old gentleman, however, was in a state of great agitation, and he informed me that he felt perfectly sure Robert was dead, for he could imagine no cause that would have prevented him communicating by this time had he

been well. I replied that, while he could not imagine a cause for the lad's silence, I could, and I begged him to remain quiet for a few days. To this, however, he would not consent, for he averred that the suspense was so terrible he could bear it no longer, and he would rather know the truth, though that truth was that his son was dead, than remain longer in ignorance of his fate. Consequently he had determined to insert an advertisement in all the papers offering five thousand pounds reward for any information that would lead to the discovery of the murderers, for he declared that he was perfectly convinced that his son was murdered. I pointed out to him that the difficulties in the way of disposing of a dead body were so great that when several weeks had elapsed and no trace had been got it was safe to dismiss the theory of death. In answer to this, he argued that it was conceivable that a murder might be committed in a place where the body could effectually be concealed, and he supported his argument by supposing a case of a young man being lured to an empty house in some lonely suburb and buried in the cellar, or taken on board of a small vessel, then carried out to sea, his body being thrown overboard with heavy weights attached to it.

I was, of course, bound to admit all the possibilities of his argument. But from the very first I had been opposed to the idea of murder, because the motive for it did not seem to me to be clear enough or strong enough. So far as I was able to form an opinion, he could only have been murdered out of revenge. The one person who seemed to have reason to harbour revenge was the young woman he had deceived. She might certainly have killed him alone, but she could

not have disposed of his body alone. Therefore she must have had confidants. What would be *their* motive? Not revenge also; at least, it was difficult to reconcile such an idea with common logic. If not revenge, then what else? The answer to this suggests itself. They would be hired accessories to the crime. By that I mean they would give their services for payment. But opposed to this was the fairly well-established fact that Miss Hilda's means were very limited, for she had not applied to her parents, and there were no other known sources from which she could have got money; at least, so her people told me. I, of course, conceded the perfect fallibility of my reasoning, but I was dogmatic enough to stick to my views in what I considered the absence of anything better. Leaving Mr. Smith, therefore, to take his course with regard to the advertisements, I started on my new quest, and with a sense of hopefulness that I should succeed. I may mention here that at the time I am writing about it was much more easy to put a person into a private lunatic asylum than it is now. The law on the subject has been very much altered, and made more stringent; in fact, the very case I am dealing with helped to bring the change about.

In beginning my search in the new quarter I procured a list of all the asylums, public and private, within a radius of twelve miles of Mr. Smith's house. I made this an arbitrary radius, of course; but I was of opinion that the young man could not have been taken far away, for the obvious difficulties in the way of that will strike the most unthinking person. The public asylums within this radius were comparatively few, so that I had not much difficulty in visiting them all. My inquiries, however, were without result.

No person had been admitted into any of these establishments during the past few weeks who could, in any particular, be considered like the missing man. This result neither disappointed nor disheartened me, because I did not think it likely he would have been taken to a public institution, a private one offering greater facilities for putting a person away. There were more private asylums than public ones, and they were pretty widely scattered. Amongst these I pursued my inquiries for some time, seemingly with no probability of any better success, and I will honestly own I did begin now to think that I was wrong, and that, after all, the missing man had been murdered in some such way as that suggested by Mr. Smith.

It chanced that one evening I called at a pretty well-known house situated in the south part of London, but here again I met with a disappointment. As I was leaving, however, one of the attendants said to me—

‘It strikes me, sir, that if you are likely to find your man anywhere it would be at old Weston’s place.’

‘Why?’ I asked quickly.

‘Well, he conducts his house in a very slipshod sort of manner, and he would confine any one as a lunatic if he were paid for it.’

I remembered now that I had heard this place spoken of in anything but complimentary terms. ‘Old Weston,’ in fact, had been in trouble before for detaining people illegally. His house was an old-fashioned place, standing in pretty extensive grounds in a semi-rural suburb—a suburb that has since been very much built upon, but which was then a quiet district, the houses, for the most part, scattered and

with large gardens. I was at Weston's place pretty early the following morning, and at once requested an interview with Mr. Weston.

He was a somewhat remarkable man ; tall and thin, with big bones and a sharp aquiline face, with deep-set reddish eyes. His appearance generally was suggestive of great muscular strength and an iron will. His career, as I subsequently learned, had been somewhat remarkable. Originally a draper's assistant, he found linen stuffs, tapes, and ribbons not congenial to his taste, and became a showman, travelling the country for several years, but living a very hard sort of life. At last he fell in with a good thing. On account of his strength mainly, he was engaged as an attendant on an old gentleman who was subject to fits of aberration, during which he became very violent. He fulfilled his duties as an attendant for five years, when the gentleman died. He had made a will in favour of Weston, leaving him a fortune of fifty thousand pounds. The relatives immediately gave notice that they would dispute the will owing to the testator's state of mind. Weston was advised that the will would certainly be set aside on the ground of lunacy, but, as he could nevertheless have put the relatives to very considerable expense and trouble, they agreed to pay him the sum of five thousand pounds, which he accepted. With this he bought the house which I have spoken of, and advertised for insane patients. In a short time he had almost more than he could manage. But a year or two later he was tried for killing a lunatic, but acquitted, as it was proved beyond doubt that the man, who was in a dangerous state, attacked him savagely, and would have killed him had Weston not possessed great

strength and presence of mind. He managed to throw his assailant to the ground, but with such force that he broke his back. At the time I first met Weston he was reputed to be worth a large fortune, which he had made out of his asylum. On stating my business to him I found that he was not at all inclined to be communicative or even polite. He seemed to resent my inquiries as an imputation on himself and his business.

‘Do you suppose,’ he exclaimed hotly, ‘that I am likely to detain a sane man as an insane one?’

‘I have formed no supposition in the matter, sir,’ I answered with emphasis, ‘but what I want to do is to see your patients.’

‘That you won’t do,’ he returned, ‘unless you are a relative of any of them.’

‘I am not a relative of any of them that I am aware of, but I am a detective officer. My name is Donovan, and you may save yourself some unpleasantness by according me the permission I seek.’

He seemed somewhat surprised, and changed his tone, although he still showed reluctance to my going over the house. I brought him to see, however, how very impolitic it would be for him to set himself in opposition to me, and consequently to the law, and, as he came at last to see the affair in that light, he rang for an attendant, and gave him instructions to conduct me over the place.

There were over a hundred patients in the house. But at many of these I only gave a passing glance, for they did not in the least degree bear any resemblance to the missing man; nor did the remainder hold out any hope that I was on the right track.

‘Are those all your patients?’ I asked the attendant in a casual way.

‘Well, sir, you’ve seen them all but three—two women and a young man. They are dangerous, however, and confined in the padded cells.’

I pricked up my ears at the ‘young man.’ The word ‘young’ seemed to me somehow to be suggestive, and I immediately asked—

‘How long has the young man been in?’

‘I think about six weeks, sir.’

‘Where did he come from?’

‘I don’t know. He was brought here late one night in a cab. He was in a raving state, and was confined in a straight jacket. It’s no business of us servants, you know, to inquire where patients come from.’

‘I must see that man,’ I said decisively.

‘Certainly, if you wish it,’ answered the attendant, and he led me to an isolated room in one of the wings of the building. The room was in partial darkness, but I saw that it was padded; and I saw more than this. I saw a young man with a clean shaved head and face, or rather there was a stubbly growth of hair on his face. The moment the door was opened the young man sprang forward, but the attendant thrust him back.

‘That’s the way he always does, sir,’ said the attendant to me.

‘By God!’ exclaimed the patient excitedly, and clasping his hands above his head, ‘let me out of this or I really shall go mad.’

Those words had a strange significance for me, and I immediately asked—

‘What is your name, young fellow?’

‘Robert Smith,’ he answered with a sort of despairing wail.

I knew then that my quest had ended.

The attendant laughed, and said—

‘That’s one of his manias. He always calls himself Robert Smith.’

‘And he is Robert Smith,’ I answered quietly, to the man’s utter amazement. Then Smith threw his arms around my neck and hugged me. ‘Now, do not excite yourself,’ I said. ‘It will be all right now. I am a detective, and have been searching for you for weeks. Now that I have found you I am not going to lose you again.’ He controlled himself with a considerable effort, and, leaving him, I went at once to Mr. Weston and told him the circumstances. He was not easily convinced, but had to yield at last, and in the course of half-an-hour I was driving with Robert Smith in a cab to his parents’ house.

I will not attempt to describe the meeting. It was remarkable, and as Robert was really ill and excited I deemed it prudent not to question him then, and so left him.

Three days later I went back again. He seemed to have quite recovered from the effects of his extraordinary adventure, but he was by no means disposed to tell his story. He had not told his parents or his sisters. Of course there was no law to compel him to tell, but when I informed him that I knew all about his connection with Hilda Simpson he changed his tone, and seemed to be much cast down. He subsequently placed me in possession of the following strange facts.

For three or four weeks before the day that had been fixed for his marriage with the lady who was to have been his bride, he received numerous letters from Hilda. First they were written in a tone of appeal;

then they were hysterical; and at last they became threatening, and she vowed that if he did not go and see her, and make some arrangement for her future, she would go direct with her baby to his bride. Wishing to avoid such a scandal, he agreed to meet her at a house in the borough, and which, although he did not know it then, was in the occupation of her uncle. Young Smith wrote that letter to the girl which, owing to the impress on the blotting paper, gave me a clue. On reaching the house he was shown upstairs to a top room, and was told that Hilda would come to him. In the course of ten minutes the door opened, and instead of Hilda the uncle presented himself. He presented a paper, and demanded Smith's signature to it. The paper was a solemn promise to marry Hilda. On young Smith refusing to sign this, the uncle whistled, and three powerful men entered the room. The young fellow was at once seized, and, in spite of his struggles and resistance, he was securely bound and gagged, and while in that state his head was shaved, and so was his face; and being deprived of his hair and a full moustache, his appearance was so altered that his own mother would not have known him. At a late hour that night he was carried down stairs, put into a cab with three men, and driven rapidly to the lunatic asylum. At the asylum a paper was presented, purporting to be a certificate setting forth that Robert was a dangerous lunatic of homicidal tendencies, and needed to be strictly guarded. This certificate had been drawn up and signed by one of the three men, who had been a ship's doctor, but had come down to the gutter through dissipation. Of course, the more Robert denied this and the more he protested, the more was it looked upon by Old Weston

as insanity. At length young Smith, in his despair, made a desperate attempt to break away, knocking down an attendant, and struggling frantically with the men who had brought him. This conduct was taken as positive proof of violent madness by Mr. Weston, who at once got extra assistance; and at last the unfortunate young fellow was carried in an exhausted and helpless state to the padded room, where I found him, and where he had been kept all the time, being allowed out a little every day for exercise. But he was always closely guarded, and he had to walk about in the grounds when all the other patients had gone in.

I saw at once that no case could be made out against Weston unless it was one of gross carelessness, but the uncle and the three men had rendered themselves liable to prosecution for a conspiracy to deprive one of Her Majesty's subjects of his lawful liberty, while the broken-down doctor could have been indicted for even a more serious crime. Robert Smith and his people, however, resolutely declined to take any steps. They wished the scandal hushed up as much as possible. It was impossible, however, to prevent the truth from reaching the ears of the friends of the young lady who was to have been his wife, and of course the truth comprised the story of Hilda. They were, as was only natural they should be, highly indignant, and the match was at once broken off. It was a great blow to Robert, and as his health had been affected by the treatment he had been subjected to and the confinement, he became seriously ill, and had to go away. It turned out that Hilda's uncle was really responsible for all that had happened. He had severely felt the disgrace brought upon his family, and

had insisted on Hilda writing the letters. He had kept her whereabouts a secret from her other relatives, being hopeful that he might yet induce Robert to marry her. But finding that was hopeless, he devised the plot which led to Robert's detention in the asylum. The uncle knew that as long as he was there he couldn't marry anyone else.

I subsequently had an interview with Miss Simpson, and I found her a most charming young woman, and not at all the kind of person to lend herself to such a desperate plot. She was, of course, broken-hearted and highly indignant at the way Robert had treated her. No steps were taken against those concerned in the plot, though later on the matter was brought under the notice of the authorities as evidence showing how a sane person might be easily confined in an asylum.

I am happy to say that a year later Robert Smith made reparation for the wrong he had done Hilda by marrying her; and for this ending of the little drama I was to some extent responsible, for it was mainly through my instrumentality that it was brought about. Young Smith's people were at first opposed to the marriage, but gave way at last when they saw that Robert was determined.

Years have passed since then. Smith, senior, has been gathered to his fathers, and his son has succeeded him in his business. He is now the father of a large family, and Mrs. Hilda Smith is a charming matronly woman. I have had the honour of their close friendship for years, and I have reason to believe that Robert has never once regretted making Hilda his wife.

THE MYSTERY OF A TIN BOX.

I HAPPENED one morning to be leaving the central station in Glasgow when I was accosted by a starved, wretched-looking, draggle-tailed little lassie, with a shawl over her head, who said in a voice rusty with want and exposure to all weathers—

‘Please, Mister Donovan, I want to speak to you.’

I was naturally surprised to hear myself addressed so familiarly apparently by a gutter waif, and I was struck also by her air of easy self-assurance, which was that rather of an experienced woman instead of a child. For though I could not see her face very well, her appearance generally was suggestive of a girl of about ten or twelve years of age.

‘Who are you?’ I asked, suddenly confronting her.

‘I’m called Maggie M’Gee,’ she answered.

‘M’Gee, M’Gee,’ I mused, wondering where I had heard the name, as it seemed familiar to me.

‘How do you know me, Maggie?’ I asked, trying to peer into her face. But the daylight had faded, and her face was screened by a shawl.

‘I mind you when I was in Court when my grandad was being tried,’ she answered.

‘Oh, now I remember,’ I exclaimed. ‘Your grandad is known as Jamie the Miser. Eh?’

‘Yes, sir. That’s what folk ca’ him.’

This man, whose name was James Dougal, but who was generally known as ‘Jamie the Miser,’ was one of the most cunning old rascals in Glasgow. He was frequently being brought up for begging and obstruction, and when a small fine was imposed he used to whine about his absolute poverty, and vow by everything sacred he could think of that he ‘hadna a saxpence to save his soul.’ The result was, he was always locked up; for rumour had it that Jamie was a miser, and had a nice little hoard stored away somewhere. Socially he was one of those human pariahs who seem to be utterly beyond the reach of teaching, preaching, philanthropy, or example. They are born pariahs, live pariahs, and die as pariahs, and nothing will change their nature, no more than the rain will wash the spots off a leopard. That is, nothing has been able to change them up to the present. What that costly organisation, the School Board, may do in the future remains to be seen.

I had had occasion six months or so before this to become rather intimately acquainted with Jamie, as I had arrested him on suspicion of being concerned in a robbery. A baker’s shop had been entered by thieves one Sunday morning, and a considerable sum of money stolen, including thirty-five £1 notes. For this robbery we arrested three men and a woman. The men were Old Jamie, a nephew of his, and the nephew’s son. The woman was the nephew’s wife, or at any rate passed as such, which is much the same thing with these sort of people. The nephew and son were convicted; the woman was discharged, for though there was not a shadow of a doubt that she had aided and abetted the male prisoner, no legal evidence

could be got against her, and so she escaped by the skin of her teeth, as the saying is. This woman was known as Sarah Henderson, and she, her husband, the son, which was not her son, and the old man had all been living together in two rooms in a wynd off the Briggate. Jamie had got off for the same reason as she had—that is, there was no evidence forthcoming against him. We could not prove that he knew of the robbery. Had his own statements been worth anything he must have been one of the greatest martyrs who ever suffered persecution at the hands of the barbarous laws of civilisation, which will not allow poor thieves and murderers to do as they like, notwithstanding they live in a free country.

With groans, sighs, lamentations, and forcible appeals to the powers above, Jamie the Miser vowed his innocence, and declared that it was a burning shame that such a poor, weak, harmless old man as he was should be treated in such a harsh way. These protestations of innocence, of course, availed him nothing, but as the law cannot convict without evidence sufficient to establish guilt, the cunning old rascal went free. But the strangest part of the affair was this—the bank notes were never discovered. It was intimated to the two younger male prisoners that if they would aid in restoring the money to the rightful owner, who was a poor man, and in danger of becoming insolvent through his loss, it might weigh in their favour when sentence was being passed. The elder of the two gave up the greater part of the loose cash that had been stolen, amounting to a few pounds, but he swore that he had lost the notes. He said that he had the notes in his pocket soon after the robbery, but he became insensible through drink, and

when he recovered he found he had lost the notes, and he had not the remotest idea what had become of them. Little incidents that came to light served to corroborate this statement, and the question to determine was what had become of the notes? As I have already intimated, the question could not be answered; the money was not forthcoming, and the poor baker had to grin and bear his loss, though part of it was made up to him through the kindness of his neighbours.

Through this affair I had become acquainted with Maggie M'Gee, who was in the Court at the time her relatives were being tried, and I learned that she was the child of the old man's daughter, who had died in the hospital some time previous owing to an accident.

Such, then, was my knowledge of the interesting family, of which a representative in the person of this forlorn slattern now accosted me.

'Well, what do you want with me, Maggie?' I demanded.

'It isna me that's wantin' you. It's my grandad.'

'Oh, and what does your grandad want?'

'I dinna ken. He just telt me to see you and say you must come to him at once.'

This was a rather peremptory order, but it immediately occurred to me that the old villain, either from motives of revenge or remorse, wanted to make a revelation about the robbery at the baker's.

'And where is your grandad?' I asked.

'He's lying in his bed. He is very ill, and canna get up.'

This strengthened my idea about the remorse, and so telling the girl I would go with her at once, we

started off. I followed her to one of the noisome wynds off the Briggate, and then up a dark and greasy stair to an apartment that was unutterably filthy and ill smelling. Here in a room, the floor of which was black and slippery with the grime and dirt of ages, Jamie the Miser was lying on a wretched bed, and was covered up with a heap of rags that were the colour of the floor from dirt. There was no fire, although the weather was very cold, and no light. But Maggie struck a match as we entered, and lighted about an inch of candle that was stuck in an old blacking bottle. Jamie raised himself up on his elbow and groaned. His face was exactly like an ancient chimpanzee. It was withered, puckered, and dried up. The nose and chin almost met. He had small, restless, cunning eyes, with red eyelids, and no eyelashes. A short, thin fringe of yellowish grey hair fell over his retreating forehead, and added to the repulsiveness of his appearance.

‘Who is that?’ he cried. Then, as he recognised me, he whined, ‘Oh, it’s you, Mr. Donovan! The Lord bless you for coming.’

‘And what’s the matter with you, Jamie?’ I asked, as I went to a small window, the glass of which was opaque with dirt, my intention being to open it, and let in some of the purer air from the outside. But the old wretch screamed out—

‘For the love of heaven, Mr. Donovan, don’t open the winder. I’ve got the cold in all me jints now, and you’ll kill me. It’s the warmth I want, but the Lord pity me, I’m too poor even to get a wee bit fire.’

‘Well, what is it you want with me?’ I said. ‘Be quick and tell me, and let me away out of this, or I shall be poisoned.’

‘Gae awa doon the stair, Maggie,’ the old fellow said to the girl, and she in obedience to the order left the room. Then he invited me to sit on the bed in the absence of a chair, but I preferred to give that dirt heap as wide a berth as possible, and I requested him to state his business quickly.

‘Weel, Mr. Donovan,’ he began, ‘I ken you are the cleverest man in all Glasgow for finding oot thieves——’

‘Well, look here, that’s enough of that,’ I exclaimed, cutting him short. ‘What have you sent for me for?’

‘Weel, I’m coming tae it,’ he whined. ‘I’ve been robbed, and I want you tae fin oot the thief and get my property back.’

‘Robbed,’ I echoed, with a laugh. ‘And pray what did you possess that was worth stealing?’

‘Naething tae the likes o you, sir, but muckle tae a puir auld fellow like me.’

‘Come now, let me know what it is you’ve lost,’ I said, beginning to have suspicions.

‘Weel, sir, it’s just a sma’ tin box wi a wee bit padlock. I kept it here, doon under the bed-claes, and its gane, and the Lord kens it will be the death of me.’

‘And what was in the box?’ I asked, growing more interested.

‘Nothing o muckle consequence to anybody save a piur man like mysel. There was just twa or three pounds I’ve been scraping taegither these dizen years or more tae keep me frae starving in me auld age, and an auld, auld watch that wouldna sell for sax shillings.’

‘Anything else?’ I asked, as I watched the work-

ings of the ugly and cunning face, and noted that his bead-like eyes were fixed on me as if he was trying to read my thoughts.

‘Yes, that was all, forby a few bit things that are no worth mentioning.’

‘What are they?’

‘They are no worth mentioning,’ he repeated.

Then, as if in supplication, he put his withered hands together and moaned out—

‘Man, if ye can only get the box back before its opened the Lord will bless you. Get it, man; get it, will ye, and I’ll gie ye the twa or three pounds that’s in it, though it’s all I’ve got for my auld age.’

I was disgusted with the revolting old hypocrite, and began to suspect that the box contained something of much greater value than what he had enumerated. He was a cunning old wretch, but he had over-reached himself in his cunning this time. And I resolved to know his secret by hook or by crook. I pressed him to tell me what the ‘few bit things’ were that were not worth mentioning, but I could get nothing out of him. He whined, and whimpered, and groaned, and vowed that he would die of starvation if his box was not recovered with its contents untouched. He described the box to me as a tin one, something in the shape of a cash-box, with a lid on hinges, and fastened in front with a small brass padlock

‘Did the thief take the key?’ I asked.

‘Na, na, na,’ he cried exultingly, and as though he thought no power on earth could open the box without the key; and undoing his ragged shirt in front, he produced a small key that was attached to a piece of string round his neck. ‘Na, na, they didna get the key.’

‘But you don’t suppose that not having the key will prevent the thief from opening the box?’ I remarked.

I saw his small wicked eyes open to their fullest extent as I said this, and the brown of his parchment-like face gave place to a certain ashen greyness, the result of fear. And in a sudden burst of excitement he almost sprang off the bed as he screamed out—

‘Man, I never thought of that. For the love of heaven get the box back, Mr. Donovan, get it back before the cursed thief opens it, or if you don’t it will be the death of me.’

I told him that I did not think his death would be any great loss to the community at large, but nevertheless I would try and get his box back. I resolved to do this, not so much on his own account as on my own, for I was exceedingly anxious to know what the box contained. There was a mystery about it that I felt it to be my duty to solve.

‘Now answer me,’ I said. ‘Do you suspect any one?’

‘Yes.’

‘Who? Yon lassie?’

‘Na, na, she wouldna dae’t. It’s Sal Henderson, wife tae me nephew, wha’s daeing his time for robbing Wullie Thomson, the baker.’

‘Oh, oh, so Sal’s at the bottom of this, is she?’

The old man ground what few stumps he had remaining in his mouth, and hissed out the one word—

‘Yes.’

‘How do you know?’ I queried.

‘Because she’s the only body wha’s been in the room save the lassie, and she didna ken of the box.’

‘Did Sal?’

‘Yes.’

‘And when was your box stolen?’

‘It must have been ta’en since the morning, for I had it there at eight o’clock. Then I fell asleep, and it was after I woke that I found it gone.’

‘And have you any idea where Sal is?’

‘Na, but may be she’s just drinking in some of the publichouses wi’ a lad they ca’ Wullie Bauchle.’

As there was no other information to be got from the old fellow, I prepared to go. Then he set up his whining again, and with various appeals once more to heaven, he swore that if he didn’t get his box back he would die.

I didn’t think that, under any circumstances, his days in the land would be many, for the lamp of life was flickering then. But he evidently did not imagine he was going to die, and even in that supreme hour the miser’s greed was depicted in every lineament of his face.

Knowing what I did of Sal and her habits, I did not deem it probable that she would go far out of the neighbourhood. If she had stolen the box, and the circumstances pointed to her conclusively, she had done so because she must have had a pretty good idea that the old miser had a considerable sum hoarded up in it. And having possessed herself of that sum, her one aim would be to drink it away as fast as possible with a chosen few companions. I therefore looked in at most of the publichouses in the Briggate and the Saltmarket, and at last my search was rewarded by finding her in a helpless state of intoxication in company with the fellow known as Willie Bauchle, who was as helpless as she was. They were both sleeping in one of the small rooms in a notorious publichouse in the centre of the Saltmarket.

‘How long has she been here?’ I asked of the landlord.

‘Well, she was in two or three times in the forenoon; then she went away, and I didn’t see her again till about an hour ago, when she came back the waur of drink, as you see. She went in there with her lad, and I couldna get them away.’

I need scarcely say I did not believe this, for I knew the fellow to be a great rascal.

‘Has she spent any money here?’ I asked.

‘She changed a pound note in the forenoon, and she and Willie had two half anes.’

This changing of a pound note, assuming it was true, and there was no reason to doubt it, meant that Sal was in funds, and I felt sure the money had come out of the old man’s box.

‘Now,’ I said sternly to the landlord, ‘get two or three of your men, and put that man and woman on the street.’

He seemed disappointed and annoyed that I was thus depriving him of what he considered, no doubt, a profitable customer. But he had no alternative but to comply with my command, and so in a few minutes Sal and Willie were lugged out of the box and deposited on the pavement in the street. Then I summoned two constables, and ordered them to convey the precious pair to the station as drunks and incapables. I followed, and had them searched. Willie’s worldly possessions consisted of a shilling, an old iron tobacco box, and a very dirty pipe. In Sal’s pocket there was nothing worth speaking of, but in an artfully-contrived pouch in her stays ten one pound notes were found concealed. This was an important discovery, and I no longer had any doubt that in the old man’s tin box

there must have been a considerable sum. That Sal was the thief did not admit, in my mind, of any questioning.

About nine o'clock the following morning I went round to the station, and visited Willie first of all. He was a small-brained rascal, without two ideas in his head. He seemed to be suffering much from his spree. He told me that he had met Sal the previous morning, that she had invited him to take a dram, and she changed a pound note to pay for it. She gave him a shilling, and then they had other drams, going from place to place until he lost his senses, and remembered nothing more. As I had every reason to believe this story, he was turned out with a caution. Then I went to see my lady Sal. She still seemed a little dazed from the effects of her debauch, and when she saw me she was evidently struck with fear, for she guessed something had gone wrong.

'Well, Sal, how do you find yourself this morning?'

'I have a sore hed, and the sight of you doesna mak' me any better,' she growled, as she nursed her head in her hands. Then fiercely she exclaimed—
'Wha brought me here?'

'I had you brought here, Sal, my dear,' I answered with a smile.

'Then may the deil twist you, and you can let me awa' again as soon as you like.'

'No, Sal, I'm not going to let you away until I find out what you've done with Jamie the Miser's box.'

'Me!' she roared, springing to her feet. 'Me! What dae I ken about his box?'

'You stole it, Sal,' I replied calmly.

'You lie,' she hissed, 'and I'll defy ye tae prove it.'

'Oh, I think I shall be able to prove it. But tell

me now, where did you get the pound note you changed yesterday?’

‘I didna steal it any way. I’ve had money of my ain saved up syne lang syne.’

‘Ah, just so,’ I remarked sententiously. ‘You are a likely sort of young woman, you are, to have money saved up. I suppose you had also saved the ten pounds we took from your stays?’

Her face blanched at this, and she seemed staggered for a moment; but, quickly recovering herself, she said with a giggle—

‘Of course I did. I had twelve pounds saved, and I spent twa of them.’

I was for the moment checkmated by the creature’s audacity, and I saw that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to get evidence against her. Besides, I had my own reasons now for wanting to know more about the tin box, and so I quickly worked out a little scheme in my mind, and said to her—

‘Well, you’ll be allowed to go, but you’ll not get the ten pounds in the meantime until you’ve given proof that the money is legally yours.’

She flirted her fingers in my face as she made answer—

‘Man, Donovan, you can keep the ten pounds if you like, and much good may it dae you.’

This indifference to the money strengthened my opinion that she knew where to put her hand upon more, namely, in the tin box, and my scheme was to find out where the box was. In the course of half-an-hour she was set free, and as she hadn’t a bawbee upon her I was sure that her first move would be to get some money in order to slake her thirst. As soon as she was clear of the station, therefore, I followed her.

Like a rat that unexpectedly escapes from a trap, and makes direct for its hole, so she went direct, and at a rapid rate, to the wynd where Old Jamie lived. But she did not go up the stairs to his lodging. Giving a hasty glance round, she suddenly disappeared in an ashpit at the bottom of the wynd. I hurried up in time to see her take from a hole in the wall the tin box which Jamie had described to me. In a moment I sprang upon her and seized her with the box in her hand. She fought and struggled with me like a wild cat, but I managed to handcuff her and drag her out of the filthy place, and blowing my whistle, I soon had the assistance of some constables. None too soon, for some of the human tigers of the wynd had gathered up, and there is no doubt they would have attempted to rescue her, and perhaps have knocked me on the head. As it was, they were cowed, and we conveyed the sweet Sal to the station, where the contents of the box were examined, and were found to consist of forty-one pound notes, two five pound notes, two or three gold bracelets, a gold watch, a gold pencil case, and a very handsome brooch.'

This, then, was old Jamie's hoard, and I had not a doubt that the most of it was stolen property; doubly stolen, in fact, for Sal had stolen it from him.

A little later I went round with two assistants to see the old rascal. It was evident he was very near his end, and Maggie, who was attending him, said that he had been delirious. However, he was not so at that moment, but sprang up with great eagerness as soon as I entered, and cried out in a sort of raspy whisper—

‘Weel, weel, have you found the box?’

‘Yes,’ I answered.

He gave vent to a prolonged chuckle of delight, and fell back on the pillow with his hands clasped.

‘Yes. I’ve got the box, Jamie, and know what’s in it’—he groaned here—‘and unless you can account satisfactorily for its contents, not only will it not be restored to you, but I’ll have you taken off to the station.’

He groaned again and again, and rolled about as if in agony. Then, presently, he held forth his trembling, scraggy hands pleadingly towards me and faltered—

“I’ll tell you, I’ll tell you, but dinna tak me awa. Some of the money is what was stolen from the baker. I took it awa frae my nephew when he was drunk, because I kent he would waste it al in a day or twa.”

This was a revelation, but it was what I had suspected.

‘Very well; now as to the jewellery,’ I said.

‘I bought it, I bought it, I bought it,’ he muttered three times. Then he seemed to sink into a dazed, half-comatosed state, and appeared so exhausted that I deemed it advisable to let him alone and go for the police doctor. That gentleman was not able to attend for two hours, and when he did go he found that the wretched old man was a corpse.

I was enabled to get Sal convicted of dealing with stolen property, knowing it to be stolen, and I had the satisfaction of being instrumental in restoring the thirty pounds to the poor baker.

We could get no clue to the ownership of the other things, and so they went to swell the long list of unclaimed property in charge of the police authorities.

A FAIR DECEIVER.

ONE morning, during the time that I was on the London staff, I received a note asking me to call as early as possible on a Mr. Richard Burton, a jeweller and goldsmith in business at Notting Hill. In accordance with the request I went out to Notting Hill as soon as convenient and waited upon Mr. Burton. I found him a young, mild-eyed man, with blonde hair, and a certain lackadaisical expression, which did not suggest the probability of his either setting the Thames on fire or becoming Prime Minister. He was by trade a jeweller, watchmaker, and goldsmith, and was in business for himself. His business premises consisted of a lock-up shop, which I shall describe more in detail a little further on, and he had a pretty good stock, which he told me was valued at £3,000. Before I had been in Mr. Burton's company a quarter of an hour I had formed a fairly accurate estimate of his character, and that estimate led me to the conclusion that he was lacking in anything like strength of mind or force of character. He was a confiding person, of a sentimental turn, and child-like and bland in disposition. He was a good young man, too, as young men go, for he was a teacher at a Sunday school, and in his own small way a bit of a philanthropist.

I soon gathered from his conversation that he was an only son. He had been in business with his father, and he had succeeded to the business two years before this on the death of his father. He had a mother and three sisters, with whom he lived about a mile from his place of business, and he paid his mother £2 a week for his board and lodging. He was twenty-five years of age, and was looking forward to getting married in a few months' time. So much information did he impart to me in an artless, confiding sort of way, not as a straightforward narrative, but rather incidentally, and as though he was under the impression that I ought to know some few particulars of his private affairs. In fact, I have an idea that he would have given me the whole genealogical history of his family had I not brought him to the point by saying—

‘I gathered from your note, Mr. Burton, that you wished to avail yourself of my professional services. Is that not so?’

‘Oh, yes. I have heard of you frequently, and a friend of mine, who is personally acquainted with you, recommended me to apply to you. The fact is I have for several months been a victim of a series of systematic robberies, so mysteriously carried out that they have defied detection.’

‘Robberies of your stock?’ I asked.

‘Yes. Things have been carried off by degrees. Sometimes a ring or two, then chains, pins, watches, brooches. I have lodged information with the local police, and the premises have been watched, but without any result. My loss has now become so serious that I must endeavour to stop it or I shall be ruined.’

Of course I asked him whom he had in his employ, and with a little smile he said—

‘I was prepared for that question. But let me say at once that I will stake my existence that it is not my own people who are robbing me.’

I smiled in turn as I remarked—

‘Ah, just so; but I should prefer to form an independent judgment on that point.’

‘Oh, of course you can do that, but you will find I am right in my confidence,’ he answered quickly, and with a suspicion of sharpness, as though he was prepared to resent anything like an imputation on the honesty of his employés. Then he went on to inform me that he employed an old and very steady workman, who had been with his father for twenty years; a younger man, who had been five years in his father’s employ; and a youth of eighteen, whom he had taken as an apprentice.

‘Have you no one else about your premises?’ I inquired.

‘I have no one else in my employ.’

‘What I mean is, does anyone call upon you?’

‘Commercial travellers principally, and the young lady to whom I am engaged comes in nearly every day; and always on a Saturday afternoon a char-woman comes to wash the shop out.’

‘Do you leave your stock loose at night?’

‘Not all. The most valuable part of it—that is, diamonds and other precious stones—are put into the safe; but I am compelled to leave a quantity in the window, as it would consume too much time to remove all the things from the window every night and put them back in the morning.’

‘From what part of the stock have the things stolen usually been taken?’

‘Oh, the thief or thieves have been perfectly impartial, and I have missed as many things from the safe as elsewhere.’

‘From the safe?’ I exclaimed.

‘Yes, and that is what makes the matter all the more mysterious, because the safe has never shown any signs of being tampered with. A key has evidently been used for opening the door.’

This bit of information astonished me; that is, I was astonished at what I considered his simplicity, for it seemed to me clear that only some one in his employ could have access to the safe. I plied him with a good many other questions for my own guidance, and I was particular to inquire why he did not suspect his employés, and his answer was that they were highly respectable men, and were as much concerned about his losses as he himself was.

I need scarcely say that this opinion did not weigh much with me, and I proceeded to make myself acquainted with his three workmen, and I am bound to say there was nothing in their manner or their answers to my questions that raised the faintest suspicion in my mind. Private inquiries about them tended to prove all that their employer had said, namely, that they were highly respectable, and there was nothing in their antecedents or their present style of living which justified one in assuming that any one of the three was the guilty party.

The premises occupied by Mr. Burton consisted of a large shop with plate glass windows facing the main street. Leading out of the shop was a small room used by the proprietor as a sitting-room and for taking his meals in, and in this room was the safe, standing on brick supports in one corner. At the back of the

shop was a large workshop lighted by a window looking on to a yard. At night the window was secured by an iron shutter. There was no sleeping accommodation on this part of the premises. The rest of the building was composed of a private dwelling-house above the shop, and consisted of two storeys, with an independent entrance from the street. The dwelling-house was in the occupation of a widow lady, a Mrs. Hartley, who had two sons and a daughter. The daughter—Lydia, an exceedingly pretty girl—was the sweetheart of Mr. Burton. She was a year younger than he was, but, having a small figure, she looked very girlish. Her brothers, who were both her juniors, were employed in the city. One was a clerk in a shipping office and the other was in a stockbroker's office.

I spent three or four days in finding out the foregoing particulars, and at the end of that time I had to admit to myself that I had quite failed to obtain the slightest clue. There was no reason to doubt Mr. Burton's statement that he really had been robbed to the extent and in the way he stated. But that being so, the difficulty of the case was increased, and from the fact of the premises not being forcibly entered, it was a conviction with me that the thief was some one connected with the jeweller. The local police, I found, were disposed to look upon Mr. Burton as a nuisance, and they also doubted his having been robbed at all. But then I could understand this feeling very well, for he had frequently complained to them, and they had been unable to do anything. Although at this stage I was not able to even construct a theory of the robbery, I was not inclined to give the matter up, for the goods having been stolen, there was a thief somewhere, and it was my business to find him out.

One afternoon I called upon Mr. Burton with a view to discussing the matter with him, and suggesting the advisability of laying a trap for his men in case any one of them was the thief. Burton was in the shop as I entered, for he was engaged with a customer, but as soon as the customer had gone he led me into the sitting-room. Miss Lydia Hartley was there, and he at once introduced me to her.

‘Lydia knows all about you,’ he added, ‘for I have told her what exertions you have been making to try and discover the thief.’

She rose and extended to me the tips of her gloved fingers, and smiled in a sort of patronising way. She was a strikingly pretty girl, but the whole expression of her face, as well as the flash of her eyes, indicated that she had a will and a temper of her own, and I thought to myself, ‘If ever you become the wife of Burton, the grey mare will be the better horse, and you will rule your husband with a rod of iron.’

She was inquisitive, too, and had a sort of legal way of putting questions. That is, her questions were apparently framed with a view to drawing out the person questioned. She was very anxious to know what I had done in the case, what I thought, and what I was going to do, but on none of these points did I satisfy her. It was not my habit to answer the demands of every feather-brained person who liked to talk to me. Finding that I was not amenable to the pumping system, she exclaimed in a fascinating way—

‘Now, Mr. Donovan, tell me do you not suspect *any* one?’

‘Miss Hartley,’ I answered with a smile, ‘my professional experience has taught me the advisability of

not imparting my suspicions to anyone who chooses to question me.'

'Oh, but you will tell *me*?' she said prettily, as she clasped her hands together on her knees, and looked at me with an expectant, wistful expression.

'Not even you,' I answered.

'You *are* cruel,' she cried peevishly. 'You forget what my position is in regard to Mr. Burton. Surely I have a right to know whatever he is interested in.'

'I am aware of your position, Miss,' I returned, 'but this is a matter in which I must exercise my own judgment, and therefore I must respectfully decline to tell you what my views and thoughts are.'

She was greatly annoyed, though she made an effort to conceal her annoyance. Nevertheless, she jumped up and said to Burton—

'Dick, I will go. It is evident Mr. Donovan does not desire my company.'

She did not give me the chance of making any reply, but went out into the shop, followed by Dick, who closed the half-glazed door. Her exasperation immediately got the better of her then, and I heard her exclaim—

'I don't like that man, Dick, and if you will take my advice you will get rid of him.'

'Oh, nonsense, dear,' he answered. 'If anyone can unravel this mystery he can.'

'Can he?' she sneered. 'Well, I tell you one thing. You will either give me up or send him about his business.'

I did not hear what answer he made to that, for she bounced out of the shop and he went after her. It was fully ten minutes before he returned. He looked pale and agitated, and he was not in full command of

himself, as he said in an uncertain and stammering way—

‘I have come to the conclusion, Mr. Donovan, that it is useless your wasting any more of your time over this case, for it seems to me obvious that we shall never solve the mystery. Therefore I won’t trouble you any further.’

‘I must differ from you in regard to the difficulties of the case,’ I answered, ‘and I think I can undertake to say that I will clear up the mystery within a week.’

‘Have you any clue?’ he asked quickly.

‘Pardon me for not answering that question,’ I said firmly.

‘Oh, very well,’ he replied tartly. ‘But it’s no use chasing shadows, you know; and in the mean time I would rather you took no further trouble in the matter.’

‘As you will,’ I said, ‘but I think I may predict that the depredations from which you have suffered will increase rather than diminish.’

He looked at me with a curious and inquiring expression, but I was not disposed to enter into any explanation of my meaning, and shaking his hand I bade him good afternoon and left him, but with a feeling very like a conviction that he would send for me before long. Nor was I wrong, for when a fortnight had expired I received a letter from him begging me to call if I should be in his neighbourhood. Of course I was in his neighbourhood, as I made a special journey there. He received me, as I thought, a little sheepishly, as though somewhat ashamed of himself.

‘I am afraid,’ he began, ‘that when I parted from you last I had come to a somewhat premature and hasty conclusion. At any rate, your prediction has

come true, and I have been robbed twice since I saw you; and the most serious part of the affair is that on the last occasion the thief carried off a diamond bracelet which had been left by a lady for repair. Of course I shall have to replace this, and if people think that their valuables are not safe when left in my charge I shall lose my custom. Matters, in fact, have reached a crisis, and I must make a most desperate effort to put a stop to this thieving.'

He was really so distressed, and wore such a woe-begone expression of countenance, that I was truly sorry for him.

'Well,' I said, 'we will see what can be done. But what does Miss Hartley think of it all?'

'Oh, she is as puzzled as I am, and, of course, she sympathises with me very much. She told me the other day that our marriage had better be postponed until I had recouped myself the losses I have suffered.'

'And you consented to that proposition?' I remarked.

'Yes.'

I could not help smiling at his simplicity, and I asked him if he had told her that he had sent for me again.

'No, I have not,' he answered, 'but I must tell her.'

'Why?' I asked, in some surprise.

'Well, you see, she is sure to get to know that you have come again, and then she will be angry with me for deceiving her.'

'Now, look here, Mr. Burton,' I said, with my most determined air, 'there is only one condition upon which I will consent to act in this matter. If that condition is faithfully observed I think I may venture to say I

will relieve you from further losses, and capture the thief. If you fail to agree to the condition you must ask some one else to take the case up.'

'What is the condition?' he asked, with manifest anxiety in his tone.

'It is that you will not let Miss Hartley know that I am investigating the affair again.'

'Why?' he exclaimed, looking very much astonished and a little bit scared, as if the very contemplation of her wrath if she should find out was too much for him.

'You must pardon me for not giving you my reasons,' I replied. 'The man who always gives a reason for everything he thinks lays himself open to argument and contradiction, for reasons do not always carry conviction with them, and very often they seem to a second person to be foolish.'

Mr. Burton looked very undecided, and I knew that the fear of his lady-love's wrath was strong upon him. But he was a weak and vacillating man, so that I was not at all surprised, though I felt it necessary to my purpose to insist on having the condition I had laid down strictly observed, so I said—

'Excuse me for putting a very point-blank question to you. Are you very much in love with Miss Hartley?'

The poor fellow blushed like a school-girl as he stammered—

'Yes, I am very fond of her.'

'Could you bear the thought of losing her?'

'Indeed, no. I verily believe it would kill me.'

'Now, look here, Mr. Burton,' I said bluntly, and laying my arm on his shoulder with a view to still further emphasise my remark, 'it strikes me very

forcibly indeed that you and Miss Hartley are not suited, and I think you should bring yourself to see that.'

'Why, what do you mean?' he exclaimed, with more fierceness and energy than I gave him credit for possessing. 'And what the deuce has this got to do with the robbery?'

'It has more to do with it than you imagine,' I replied, 'and I am strongly impressed with the idea that Miss Hartley will never become your wife.'

I was really astonished at the change my words produced in him. He turned pale and red by turns, and seemed to be struggling with some feeling that he could not master. It took him a good many moments to compose himself, then he said—

'I think, Mr. Donovan, you are entirely wandering out of your latitude in venturing to express an opinion or to give me advice on such a delicate subject. You have come here for a specific purpose, and I must ask you to confine yourself to that purpose.'

'I must take the liberty to remark, sir,' I replied, 'that I am not given to wandering from my subject, and having once struck a trail I stick to it with the fidelity of a Red Indian. Whether I am right or wrong in certain surmises must be left for the future to prove. If I am wrong, I shall apologise for anything I have said which may have wounded your feelings. But, to cut the argument short, I must insist on my condition—that is, that Miss Hartley shall be kept in entire ignorance, if possible, of my having taken the case up again.'

My words and manner had a marked effect upon him. He was very pale and excited, and his lip trembled visibly as he exclaimed in husky tones—

‘Good heavens, Mr. Donovan, it cannot be possible that you suspect Miss Hartley of being the thief?’

‘My suspicions certainly tend in that direction,’ I answered frankly.

‘This is monstrous!’ he cried, ‘and I am almost tempted into giving you physical evidence of my indignation.’

‘I am glad to see that you possess so much spirit,’ I said. ‘There is hope for you, and when you have reasoned a bit you will be more disposed to take my view. You do not suspect your workmen, and you state that the whole affair is shrouded in mystery. If you will admit to yourself the possibility—mind you, I only say possibility—of Miss Hartley having something to do with the matter, much of the mystery will at once be cleared up.’

He passed his hand over his head in a confused sort of way, and murmured—

‘I cannot bring myself to believe such a thing.’

‘It may be hard,’ I answered, ‘but many facts in real life are hard to believe, far harder than much of the romance that is written. Many years’ experience of criminals and their ways has convinced me that it is the seeming improbable that most frequently leads us to a clue. At any rate, I have generally acted upon that doctrine, and have seldom been mistaken. Now, you must remember that Miss Hartley lives above your shop. She knows a great deal of your habits and your business, and she has access to the yard into which your back door opens. I feel convinced that the thief enters your premises by the back door, and lets him or *herself* in by means of a key. Admit the soundness of my argument, and the logical sequence is obvious. I hope I have made myself clear.’

He seized my hand, and exclaimed with tears in his mild, blue eyes—

‘Although it cuts me to the quick to think you may be right, your argument almost carries conviction, and I will place myself unreservedly in your hands, with the exception of one condition.’

‘What is that?’ I asked.

‘It is that, should your surmise unhappily prove to be correct, and you bring this matter home to Lydia, you will let it rest there. That is, the affair is to be hushed up, and she is not to be prosecuted.’

I reluctantly bound myself to stand by that condition, and these preliminaries being settled, I arranged to allow a week to pass, and then to take up my quarters for several nights in the workshop, which, as I have already stated, was at the back, and anyone entering from the yard must come in at the back door and pass through the workshop. As Mr. Burton agreed to my plan, I commenced my lonely vigil in due course, ensconcing myself on the premises about ten o’clock and leaving at daybreak. I kept this up for a fortnight without any result, and was prepared to go on indefinitely until I did get some result, for I could not bear the idea of failure. During the fortnight I had learnt one important fact in connection with Miss Lydia Hartley, which went a long way towards confirming the impression I had formed of her. That fact was, that while she had affianced herself to Burton, she was keeping up a clandestine connection with another young man named William Rutter, who was a journeyman jeweller, employed by a firm of wholesale jewellers in Clerkenwell. This had grave significance for me, and I could no longer doubt that I had got upon the right scent. At last my perse-

verance was rewarded. I had taken up my quarters as usual on Mr. Burton's premises, when towards midnight I heard someone moving about in the back yard, and soon this was followed by the grating of a key in the lock of the door.

It would be impossible for me to describe my feelings at this moment. Every man who, in the conscientious discharge of his duty, feels that he is within an ace of a triumph must experience a sense of pride. I was sure now that I was right, and every one knows the peculiar satisfaction there is in proving ourselves right instead of wrong.

Slowly the key was turned in the lock, and the door opened. In the mean time I had crept under the working bench against the wall, and I could see without being seen. Then I heard the door close, and a light footstep, which I knew to be a woman's, advance, and in a few moments my theory was proved to be perfectly correct by the presence of Miss Hartley. She carried a small bull's-eye lantern, and she walked straight into the front shop. My plan was soon formed. That plan was to capture her as she returned laden with the spoil of this midnight forage. She was gone nearly half an hour, and as she returned into the workshop I stood before her. So alarmed was she that she uttered a shrill cry, and fell down on the floor in a dead faint.

It was not a pleasant position for me to find myself in, but there was no help for it, and my course seemed clear to me. I lifted her up in my arms and carried her into the sitting room, where I placed her on the sofa. She did not recover from [her swoon for some time. I did not feel any alarm, for her breathing and her pulse were very perceptible. I had lit the gas and

was waiting for the *dénouement*. When she realised the situation she was furious, and threatened and pleaded almost in a breath.

I told her that I was going to keep her a prisoner there until Mr. Burton came in the morning. This sent her off into a fit of hysterical weeping, and at last she flung herself at my feet and implored and beseeched me to let her go, and say nothing about the affair. I told her that I could not possibly do that, and asked her if William Rutter had anything to do with the dreadful business. The mention of his name struck a key-note, as it were, and she answered that it was he who had put her up to it. She had known him for three or four years, and had been so desperately infatuated with him that she would have done anything he told her. Owing to her intimacy with Mr. Burton she had managed one morning to purloin his bunch of keys, amongst which he kept the safe key, and she took an impression of that key with a piece of putty, returning the bunch before it was missed. She gave the putty impression to Rutter, who got a duplicate made. That accomplished, to get a key for the back door, which strangely enough was without bolts, was an easy matter. And the fact of her living over the shop made the rest no less easy. The stolen articles she gave to Rutter, who had promised to marry her when he had got sufficient money together to set up in business for himself.

Having told me this strange story, she appealed to my compassion to let her go, saying that she would certainly die if she were compelled to face Burton, whom she had so cruelly deceived. As I was under a pledge to him not to prosecute her, I decided to comply with her request. But, first of all, I made her

write out her confession in my note-book and sign it, adding to it a solemn declaration that it was true, and which she also signed. Then she gave up what she had that night stolen, consisting of some rings, a bracelet, and a gold watch, and she vowed to me that she would try and get back the diamond bracelet she had taken away, and about which Mr. Burton was so much concerned. I told her that if she restored that the probabilities were she would not be prosecuted. Then I gave her her liberty.

I cannot describe Mr. Burton's sorrow when he came to the shop in the morning and learnt the news. He was terribly distressed, but I believe that even then he would have made Lydia his wife that very day if she would have accepted him. But she did not give him the chance of even asking, for she disappeared from her home with the dawning of day, taking such belongings with her as she could conveniently carry. A little later I ascertained that she had joined Rutter, and the two had gone off together.

By the earnest desire of Burton, I took no steps to trace them or have them arrested. It is something to the credit of Lydia that she returned the diamond bracelet. It came by registered post, and bore the Liverpool post mark. Of course there were no further robberies from Mr. Burton's premises. Five years later I heard from his own lips that he was still a single man, and that he was likely to remain so for some time, as his faith in womankind had been cruelly shaken.

THE MURDER OF MR. NORRAWAY.

OF the many cases that I have been engaged upon few at the outset have seemed more complicated or more incapable of a solution than that of the barbarous murder of Mr. Norraway. It embraced all the elements of a dark and apparently inscrutable mystery. For, firstly, the man himself had long been a mystery, and had so isolated himself in the world that it was difficult to learn anything about him; and, secondly, the murder was so well planned, and carried out with such deliberateness, that clue to its perpetrator there seemed to be none.

I have over and over again been struck, when dealing with cases of this kind, by the extraordinary amount of romance which surrounds the lives of some individuals. Novelists in search of sensation frequently find their powers of invention at fault, but in the records of real life there is an inexhaustible mine of incidents so romantic and sensational as to put into the shade almost anything the mind of man could imagine. After all, all fiction is built upon fact; and not infrequently the fact is the stronger element of the two. The fictionist generally unconsciously copies something he has heard or read of, and only remembers in a vague and dream-like way.

Mr. Norraway at the time of his death was an old man, being nearly seventy years of age. For upwards of a quarter of a century he had lived in a cottage standing in nearly an acre of ground at Hammersmith, near London. At this time Hammersmith was quite a rural district, nursery grounds and cabbage gardens predominating. Now, as every one knows, Hammersmith has been absorbed literally into the mighty city, and where formerly there were green fields, cabbage gardens, nursery grounds, patches of wood, and little sylvan retreats, there are now miles and miles of streets. The great Babylon is insatiable, and there isn't a field or patch of wood or a pond or a strip of green field that comes within its influence but, sooner or later, is swept away by the irresistible advance of the extraordinary city, which, like the rings on the surface of a lake caused by something thrown into it, is for ever enlarging its radius.

The house in which Mr. Norraway lived was his own property. It was quite a rural residence, having a red-tiled roof and lattice window panes, while the main entrance was through a porch of trellis work, over which was trained a woodbine that flourished marvellously in its season. Although the house was not large it was commodious enough for a small family, and consisted of an upper and lower storey. There were two large cellars in the basement. Then there were two parlours and a smaller room leading off one of the parlours, and which Mr. Norraway used as a bed-room, in order that he might be saved the trouble of going upstairs. On the same flat were a kitchen, wash-house, pantry, &c. Upstairs were two or three bed-rooms, a lumber room, and a closet, and in the roof were two small garrets. The ground belonging to the

house was fenced round with an oak fence, and part of it was laid out as an orchard, the other as kitchen and flower garden.

The place was known as 'Brook Cottage,' so called perhaps on account of a tiny stream that meandered its way through the field which adjoined the garden. It was situated in a somewhat lonely position, being off the main road, and approached by a tortuous lane that was little better than a quagmire in bad weather. In the same lane was the house of a nurseryman named Ratcliffe, who rented several acres for the purpose of his business. This house was the nearest dwelling to Mr. Norraway's, the distance between the two places being about the eighth of a mile.

Mr. Norraway's household consisted of, besides himself, his housekeeper, a buxom woman about forty, who was known as "Mrs. Sharples," several birds, including a parrot, two or three cats, a dog, and a number of ducks and hens. He never left his premises, but spent his time in looking after his garden and animals. He was a strange little old man, with a pinched-up yellow face, and his usual costume was a skull cap, a dressing gown, and a pair of moleskin trousers, and he invariably wore spectacles. He was looked upon as rather an eccentric old fellow, very taciturn, at times even morose, and as he never went anywhere, and never talked about himself or his affairs, nobody seemed to know anything about him. Nor was Mrs. Sharples any more communicative, and, although she went out a good deal, and made her various purchases at the shops in the neighbourhood, she was not given to gossiping. It was said that Mr. Norraway was rather fond of his beer, and occasionally of something a little stronger. The only ground

for this statement, however, would appear to have been the fact, that occasionally orders for wines, spirits, and beer were given to a neighbouring grocer who dealt in these commodities. For nobody was able to say he had seen the old gentleman the worse for drink, and he and his housekeeper were regarded as inoffensive and well-behaved people.

One Sunday morning, about nine o'clock, Mr. Ratcliffe was startled by the violent and clamorous ringing of his door bell, and on going to the door he was surprised to see Mrs. Sharples. She was 'white as a sheet,' and was breathless and greatly excited. The only clothing she had on was her night dress and a flannel dressing gown. Her hair was dishevelled, but a handkerchief was tied about her head, and she had a pair of old slippers on her feet. Her appearance suggested that she had only just risen from her bed. In fact, she stated that was really the case.

'Oh, my God, Mr. Ratcliffe!' she exclaimed loudly as that gentleman opened his door, 'something awful has happened.'

It should be stated that Mrs. Sharples was a well-preserved, florid woman, with dark hair and eyes, and a somewhat stoutish figure. She had good teeth and a small mouth, and though she was then close on forty she really looked younger. She was, in fact, what one might term rather an attractive woman, and this had naturally led to some surprise being expressed that she should have been content to 'bury herself,' as people said, in the way she did. But it was generally believed that she had some strong inducement for living such an isolated life as she led. What that inducement was could, of course, only be guessed at, but the common belief was, 'She expected to inherit

Mr. Norraway's money.' But whether he had much or little was not known. What was known for certain was that he owned Brook Cottage and the acre of ground about it. He had bought it very cheaply about thirty years previous from a market gardener who had got into difficulties. Mr. Norraway, however, had improved his property since then, and it was generally supposed—owing to the increase in the value of land—that if it came to be sold it would fetch quadruple what its present owner had given for it.

Mrs. Sharples' excited state, her deshabille, and her exclamation, naturally alarmed Mr. Ratcliffe. He knew nothing of her beyond having 'pa sed the time of day' with her, as the saying is, and therefore her sudden appearance at his house in this condition was suggestive of something dreadful.

'What is it? What is it?' he asked quickly, but for some little time she seemed unable to say anything more, but groaned and wept hysterically. He led her into his sitting room and called his wife, and between them they managed to soothe her, and then she informed them that her master, Mr. Norraway, had been murdered.

On hearing this Mr. Ratcliffe at once started for Brook Cottage in company with his son and one of his gardeners. On entering the bed-room in the lower storey of the house they were horrified to observe the body of Mr. Norraway on the floor. He was in his nightshirt, and was lying on his back, with one knee drawn up, and his hands tightly clenched. On his bald head was a large wound, from which blood had flowed freely. Round his neck was twisted two or three times a piece of clothes' line, and so tightly had it been drawn that it had cut into the flesh.

Ratliffe was a shrewd, sensible man, so he did not disturb a single item in the room, but having assured himself, firstly, that Norraway was unmistakably dead, and that nobody was concealed about the premises, he sent his son off to give information to the police, left his gardener at the gate of Brook Cottage to keep watch, and he went back to his house, where his wife was administering to the comfort of Mrs. Sharples.

It was not long before the police were at the cottage, and it was only too evident that a tragedy of a very gruesome character had been enacted. A local surgeon who accompanied the police having made a cursory examination of the body, requested that nothing might be disturbed until the position of everything in the room had been accurately noted, and, if possible, photographed; for it was only too obvious that there had been a deadly and terrible struggle between the deceased and his murderer or murderers.

In the course of the day I received instructions to go out to Hammersmith, and make a minute inspection of Brook Cottage, and inquire into all the circumstances of the crime so far as possible. I lost no time in carrying out these instructions. I found Mr. Norraway's bed-room in a state of great confusion. A chair had been capsized, and one of its legs was broken. A looking-glass had been swept off the dressing-table, and was lying on the floor smashed in pieces. The panel of the door of a wardrobe was shattered, as if some heavy body had banged against it. Two or three panes of glass in the window were also broken. And from various cuts on the murdered man's hands, I inferred at once that during the death

struggle he himself had broken the panes with a view probably of trying to attract attention. The bed had evidently been lain in. This was testified to by the state of the pillows, the sheets, and the clothes generally. Mr. Norraway had been in bed, therefore, before he was attacked. The fact was further proved by his wearing his nighshirt, and a woollen nightcap that had come off in the struggle was lying on the floor near the wash-stand. The floor of the room was covered with a Kidderminster carpet, with a rather light grey ground. On closely inspecting this, I found patches of blood stains nearly all over it. There were also blood stains on the wall paper and on the furniture.

The cord round the dead man's throat was a piece of ordinary clothes' line about three yards in length. But there was a peculiarity in connection with it that I did not fail to note. *It was noosed.* And the noose having been slipped round the neck, it had failed to tighten owing to the faulty knot, as the murderer, no doubt, intended it should. This little fact had great significance for me, and by it I was enabled to determine the plan of the murder, which seemed to me to be this: Mr. Norraway had retired to rest when the murderer entered the room, or perhaps had been concealed there beforehand. He then attempted, or rather succeeded in getting the noose of his rope round the old man's neck, but the noose did not tighten owing to the knot refusing to slip. Mr. Norraway then sprang from his bed, and grappled his assailant, and a terrible struggle ensued. It must have lasted for some time, during which the murderer struck his victim on the head with some blunt instrument, hoping to stun him. That he had not done so

was proved by the blood being all over the place, which showed that the struggle had gone on after the blow had been struck. Ultimately, however, the poor old man grew weak, then his cowardly assailant twisted the free end of the rope about his throat, and completed his fiendish work. Mr. Norraway had consequently been killed by strangulation, and not by the blow on the head, although this was very severe.

The murderer must have been a fairly powerful man to have overpowered his victim whom he had failed to stun. Having completed his hellish work he was considerably stained with blood, and he had washed himself in the wash-hand basin in which the reddened water was still standing. Having washed himself he brushed and combed his hair and whiskers. The reader will be justified in asking how I knew that he brushed and combed his hair, and that he had whiskers?

I discovered it in this way. Gripped in the dead man's right hand were some hairs, rather coarse in texture and of a brown colour. His own hair, which was very scant, was white and silky and soft. Therefore the hairs that he held he had torn from the head of the murderer. In the brush and comb I found hairs identical with these, together with some short, crisp, curly ones of a redder hue, and these were whisker hairs; because the hair of a man's whiskers is generally lighter in hue than that of his head, and if the hair of his head is brown the colour of his whiskers will approximate more closely to red.

The little details I have chronicled were to my mind so many pieces of indisputable evidence, proving several things. Firstly, that the murderer was a man, and one of considerable strength; secondly, that he

had coarse brown hair, with reddish whiskers; thirdly, that he was a cool and deliberate fellow, since he had been enabled to perform his toilet after his fiendish crime.

Now came the question, What was the motive for the crime? Not robbery apparently, for on the dressing table were a massive old-fashioned gold repeater watch, a number of valuable gold seals, and a gold chain. On a china tray was a large seal ring, such as were worn by our grandfathers sixty or seventy years ago. There were also a pair of gold rimmed spectacles and a silver snuffbox. In an unlocked drawer in the dressing table was a sum of money amounting to fourteen pounds eight and threepence. It included a five pound note; the rest was in gold and silver. On the mantelpiece was a heavy silver drinking cup, and on a little stand on the mantelpiece, covered with a glass shade, was a collection of antique rings and brooches, some of them very valuable, being set with precious stones. They were, no doubt, family heirlooms and mementoes. I had no hesitation in deciding that, had the motives of the criminal been robbery, he most certainly would not have gone off and left these valuables behind him, for, by the fact of his having washed himself and combed his hair, he showed that he was perfectly self-possessed, and it was clear also that he had not been disturbed, and must have had ample time to explore the place and ransack every drawer in the room.

His intention then was not to rob his victim, and the murder had been committed for some other purpose. What was that purpose? Such cases as these are always puzzling. If a man breaks into a house and kills its owner for the sake of carrying off his valuables,

the motive is manifest, and there is little mystery in the case. But when a man is murdered as Mr. Norraway was, and not an item of his property is purloined, the case at once becomes complicated, involved, and mysterious. When robbery is not the motive some other has to be sought for. A madman may commit a murder absolutely without motive. But given that the murderer is not mad, some strong reason must have prompted him to the deed, and if that reason was not to steal, if he can pass by valuable jewellery, which of all other forms of portable property is the most easily disposed of by the thief, and the least liable to cause detection, it would seem as if he were actuated by revenge. And naturally I asked myself if Mr. Norraway had been killed for the sake of revenge? To decide this was very important to me, because, seeing what a quiet, orderly, harmless old man he was, a stranger could hardly have harboured feelings of revenge against him. Therefore, it must have been a relative or somebody who knew him well. And in trying to read the riddle I should have to try and find out something of his family affairs. But, before proceeding to that, there was a good deal to clear away in the preliminary stage of the inquiry. I had to determine how the murderer had got into the house, and how he had got out. The latter was not so important as the former, because the means that afforded him ingress would also serve as egress. Unfortunately a gravel path ran all round the house. I say unfortunately, because the foot leaves no prints upon gravel, and in a case of this kind a footprint has often a very important bearing in the unravelling of the tangled skein. I examined the gravel, however, very carefully near the door and under the window of Mr. Norraway's

bed-room, which was only a few feet from the ground, and here I discovered some little marks of blood on the stones. This pointed to the murderer having escaped by the window, and I found that the latch of the window was unfastened. It was not improbable, therefore, I thought, that he might have got in by the window, and have concealed himself under the bed until his victim had retired and fallen asleep.

My next step was to have an interview with Mrs. Sharples. She had been so upset that she remained at Mr. Ratcliffe's all the day. In fact, she said that she was so terrified that she would not be able to sleep in Brook Cottage again, and so the Ratcliffes very kindly offered her a temporary home.

I found her very much distressed and agitated, so much so that she seemed incapable of giving me a clear statement of the facts so far as she knew them. But I gathered this much—Mr. Norraway had a passion for cribbage, and he had taught her to play, and every night he and she played for about two hours. On the night of the murder they played as usual, and he, after partaking of a little spirits and water, had retired to his room about eleven o'clock. Between eight and nine the following morning she went to his room with a cup of coffee as she was in the habit of doing, and she was horrified to find him dead on the floor.

As it was so obvious that there had been a desperate struggle, and that panes of glass in the window had been smashed, I asked her if she had not heard any noise, and she said that she had not; and accounted for her not doing so by the fact that she slept upstairs in a back room, while Mr. Norraway's room was in the front of the house, and at the opposite corner to hers.

There was one other point in the preliminary stage that it was very important should be cleared up. The wound on the murdered man's head showed that it had been inflicted by some blunt instrument. The medical evidence was to the effect that, although the blow had been a severe one, it was not necessarily a fatal one; at least not immediately so. Such a blow on the head of a man of Mr. Norraway's age could not but be dangerous, and had he not been strangled the blow might ultimately have produced his death. As it was, the loss of blood had probably brought on a faintness which had enabled the criminal to complete his diabolical work. Although a small man, Norraway was a muscular man, and must have been possessed of considerable strength, and, with the fear of death on him, he might have become formidable. The murderer had probably thought that he had only a feeble old man to deal with, and that to strangle him would be a very easy matter. Therefore, he had not come prepared for contingencies. He had relied upon his piece of cord, which would have been effectual enough had it been provided with a proper slip noose that would have tightened when the rope was jerked. But this having failed at the critical moment, and the old man being roused to fury by the menace to his life, had to be subdued in some other way. How had it been done? My own impression was that the assailant had caught hold of something during the struggle and hit his victim on the head. I did not think that something was a stick, because when two men are locked together in a struggle it is most difficult for one to hit the other on the head with a stick, owing to the length of the stick. Under such circumstances, one cannot get a full swing of the arm. It might,

of course, have been a life preserver, but I did not think it was, for the reason I have stated. It seemed to me the murderer had relied on his cord, and the blow on the head was an after thought. Had I been asked at the time why the cord had been used, I should have answered without hesitation—because the assailant wished to avoid shedding his victim's blood lest it might prove his own undoing, for blood stains on clothes are not only extremely difficult to get rid of, but are most damning evidence if detected. And modern chemistry and the microscope enable us to distinguish with almost absolute certainty human blood from that of animal's.

Given that I was right in this conjecture, it pointed in a confirmatory manner to my theory that the murderer was a cool, deliberate rascal, and had gone about his work in a very methodical manner. While I was thus puzzling my brains to try and suggest some likely weapon that had been used, it occurred to me to ask Mrs. Sharples if her master had a bootjack.

'Oh, yes,' was the answer given, as I thought, somewhat reluctantly.

'I've got it at last,' I mentally exclaimed, and I at once proceeded to search for a bootjack. It was not in the room, but I felt positively convinced that such an inconvenient article would not be far away, for a man fresh from such a crime would not carry a bootjack with him, as he would run great risk of being betrayed by it. I caused the grounds to be searched with such thoroughness that, had the bootjack been anywhere lying there, it must have been found. But it was not, and I was greatly disappointed. I was disappointed because I did not like to believe that my

theory was wrong ; and also because, so long as the weapon that had inflicted the wound on the head was undiscovered, the mystery of the case was rather increased. Now there was nothing else in the room that had been used. There was a poker in the fireplace, but a microscopical examination failed to detect the slightest trace of blood on it. And so I stuck to my bootjack theory, but I did not think then that the bootjack was to prove the key by which the mystery was to be unravelled.

My next step was to learn something of the murdered man's habits, and I was particular to inquire what time he retired to rest on the night of the crime. In answer to this Mrs. Sharples informed me that he had retired about eleven o'clock. The murder, therefore, must have been committed soon after he got into his bed, as the doctors declared that he must have been dead at least twelve hours when they saw the body. My opinion was the assailant had been concealed in the room ; came from his hiding place when his victim had fallen asleep, slipped the noose over his head, but woke him in so doing, and then ensued the desperate struggle.

All this seemed highly feasible and probable ; but what I was exercised in my mind about was how did the murderer get into the house ? He went out by the window. The blood-stained gravel beneath testified to that. The carpet in the room was in parts soaked with blood, and in tramping about the criminal had, of course, got some of this on to the soles of his boots, and so carried it to the gravel. I spent much time in trying to arrive at a theory as to his mode of ingress, and at last I came to the positive conclusion that he had not gone in by the window. My reason

for feeling so positive was this—the window was exceedingly difficult to open from the outside, and made a great noise. The noise would have awakened the victim without doubt. Moreover, in front of the window was a heavy dressing table that he must have pushed on one side before he could have stepped into the room. That would have made additional noise, and altogether the time occupied in gaining admission this way would have been too great.

Being somewhat timid about burglars Mr. Norraway had had extra fastenings put on his doors and windows, and the housekeeper informed me that, as soon as ever it was dusk, he had a habit of going round the house to see that the doors and windows were properly secured.

‘And did he do that on the night of his death?’ I asked Mrs. Sharples.

‘Oh, yes; I’m sure he did,’ she exclaimed, and then, with a change of colour and expression, an expression that betokened confusion, she added, in a stammering way—‘Well, that is, I—think so.’

This contradiction and the manner of it for the first time put a new thought in my head, and from that moment I felt more hopeful of tracking down the criminal. What this thought was will be seen presently.

Of course such a crime as this, surrounded as it was with all the ingredients for a romance, could not fail to make a sensation, and the day following hundreds of people flocked out to the scene of the tragedy, though they were kept at a distance by a cordon of policemen. The indefatigable and not-to-be-denied reporter was there, and with the little he learned, and the lot he invented, he made up as good a column as

the heart of a sensation-loving editor could have possibly desired.

Among the early arrivals was Mr. Launcelot King, of King, King, & Branscombes, the well-known solicitors. I had an interview with this gentleman, and he told me that for several years his firm had been Mr. Norraway's solicitors, but about two years ago he had taken offence at something or another, and they had ceased to do business for him. They had learned, however, that he had transferred his custom to a former clerk of theirs who had been discharged for some irregularity, and had subsequently set up in business on his own account.

'What is his name?' I asked.

'Charles Mellin, and he has a small office in Gray's Inn Lane.'

'Has he much practice?'

'Well, no; I should say not. However, my object in coming here is not to run him down; that would seem too much like professional jealousy. But the fact is, I know a great deal of the deceased man's affairs, and thought I might possibly be of service.'

Mr. King went on to inform me that his late client had long wished to marry his housekeeper, but she would not consent. He had made a will in her favour, leaving her all his property, which was very considerable, and he was constantly threatening that, unless she became his wife, he would alter his will and she would get nothing.

These details interested me very deeply, and I further learned that Mr. Norraway had taken his will out of King, King, & Branscombes' hands soon after Charles Mellin left them.

My interest deepened, and, for reasons that were my

own then, I resolved to seek an immediate interview with Mr. Charles Mellin. I found that his 'chambers' consisted of two rooms, and that he had two clerks; a boy about thirteen and a very deaf old man, who might have been any age from sixty to eighty. Mr. Mellin was a short, thick-set man, with small dark eyes and a scowling expression of face. There was a cool determined manner about him that impressed me, though not favourably. He was just one of those sort of men that a stranger does not take kindly to; men with repellent, not attractive manners. You could not fail to see that there was a self-consciousness and egotism about Mellin, and this made him objectionable. He was brusque and discourteous with me, and gave me a curt, snappish sort of 'yes' or 'no' to most of my questions.

'Mr. Norraway has left a will, has he not?'

'Yes.'

'It is in your possession, is it not?'

'Yes.'

'Is Mrs. Sharples interested under that will?'

'Yes.'

'Is she the only one?'

'No.'

'Who are the others?'

'There are no others. There is one other, and I am that one.'

'Oh, indeed!' I exclaimed. 'Largely so?'

'No. A legacy of a few hundreds.'

Before I took my departure I had studied Mr. Charles Mellin from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, as the saying is, and as I walked along the street a question would shape itself in my brain, and the question was this—'Is Charles Mellin guilty of

the murder of Mr. Norraway? He is powerful enough to have done it, and he is cool and deliberate.'

I have mentioned that, when I was talking to Mrs. Sharples about her late master's habits, her manner of answering certain questions put a new thought into my head. The thought was that, if she herself had not been directly concerned in the murder, she knew something about it. I determined, therefore, to work this thought out to a more definite issue.

'Have you ever been married, Mrs. Sharples?' I asked in the course of another interview I had with her.

'No.'

'Why do you call yourself Mistress then?'

'Because, as I was living with a bachelor, I thought it better to do so.'

'What were you before you entered Mr. Norraway's service?'

'A cook in a gentleman's family.'

'Have you known Mr. Charles Mellin long?'

This question, asked abruptly, and without having been led up to, caused her some uneasiness. I saw that, and watched her closely, and she was by no means comfortable as she answered with manifest hesitation—

'Yes, I have known him a considerable time.'

'Mr. Norraway wanted to marry you, did he not?'

'He did.'

'And threatened to leave his money away from you if you did not marry him?'

'Yes.'

'Was that a mere threat, or did he really mean what he said?'

'He meant what he said, I should say, for he was a determined and obstinate man.'

This was a dangerous admission, but Mrs. Sharples did not see it, and without giving her time for reflection I asked—

‘Have there been any love passages between you and Mr. Charles Mellin?’

She looked at me in a curious sort of way as she said sharply—

‘Why do you ask?’

‘For the satisfaction of my thought.’

‘Then your thought will have to go unsatisfied. I shan’t answer you.’

I smiled, and there was much meaning in my smile as I replied—

‘Then I may take your answer as an affirmative to my question?’

‘What do you want to poke about my business for?’ she asked warmly, losing her temper.

‘*My* business is to hunt down Mr. Norraway’s murderer,’ I answered with a significant look at her.

‘Do you suppose that I am his murderer?’ she exclaimed excitedly.

‘No, I do not think you are. You haven’t the strength to have committed such a crime.’

‘Thank you,’ she snarled—failing to see that there was a double meaning in my words.

I did not think it wise to pursue the subject further then, but I was convinced now I was on the scent of the murderer. Continuing my search about the house for something that might give me a clue, I descended to the cellar, where I made a minute examination, and just as I was about to leave I raised up the lid of the washing copper that stood in the corner, and there, to my astonishment, I beheld a bootjack. Lifting it out, I found that it was much stained with

blood. 'At last,' I thought, 'I have got the clue to the murder.' One thing I felt convinced of, the murderer himself had not put it there. He had come in by the door and gone out by the window. He had either been concealed in the house or let in. If let in, Mrs. Sharples had opened the door to him and knew of the murder. And after the commission of the crime she had hidden the bootjack in the copper.

The Coroner's inquest had resulted in a verdict of wilful murder against some person or persons unknown. Of course every one was asking, 'Where are the unknown persons?' and all the papers expressed a hope that this 'fiendish crime is not destined to take its place in the long list of undetected crimes that have disgraced the metropolis.' My own opinion was that it was not so destined, but I do not think anyone save myself had the slightest suspicion who the murderer was.

I became interested now in learning something about Mr. Mellin's domestic life. I found that he lived with his mother in a small house at Shepherd's Bush, and they kept one servant. Mr. Mellin and his mother did not seem to have won the hearts of the people in the neighbourhood. They were constantly at loggerheads with their neighbours. Moreover, Mr. Mellin was evidently not flourishing in a pecuniary sense, for he had to be frequently dunned for any money he owed. Ascertaining that the mother was in the habit of going out nearly every afternoon, I took advantage of her absence to call at the house, and tell the small girl who fulfilled the position of domestic slave that her master had sent me to get a parcel from his room.

Being unsophisticated and simple, and withal igno-

rant to a large extent of the ways of the wicked world, she gave me ready admittance, and I was enabled at my leisure to examine Mr. Mellin's things. I found in a wardrobe a coat and pair of trousers with suspicious stains upon them, and also a pair of muddy boots. These things I made into a bundle and carried off, and immediately took them to the laboratory of a well-known analyst in order that they might be microscopically examined. But before the result of this examination could be known, Mr. Charles Mellin disappeared from his accustomed haunts. It was easy to guess why. His servant had told him I had called and taken away a bundle. He missed his clothes, and took fright. I had got on the murderer's track at last. On my application a warrant was at once issued for the arrest of Mrs. Sharples; and a reward was also offered for the arrest of Mellin, while his portrait was circulated all over the country. Weeks, however, passed, and he was still at large, hot as the hue and cry was, and in spite of all our efforts we could get no trace of him.

In the meantime Mrs. Sharples underwent a magisterial examination. She did not seem much surprised at her arrest. She was probably prepared for it. It was proved out of her own mouth that she had been pressed by Mr. Norraway to become his wife, but had refused, as she had bestowed her affections on Mellin, who on the night of the murder had been at the house, as admitted by her; and she further admitted that he had quarrelled with his client, who had accused him of clandestinely making love to Sharples. Pressed to say whether she had concealed him in the house after the quarrel, or re-admitted him after he had gone away, she stoutly denied that she had; and

she was equally emphatic in saying that she did not believe he had come back at all. As a final question she was asked if she had concealed the bootjack in the copper. She turned deadly pale, and after fencing with the question for some time she admitted that she had. Then, pressed still further, she confessed that Mellin had committed the murder, but she knew nothing of it till afterwards, and in her fright she had hidden the bootjack.

Although it was strongly suspected that she had been an accessory to the murder, the evidence was too slender to warrant her being committed for trial, and the magistrates were obliged to discharge her. By her late master's will, which was found at Mellin's office, she was entitled to nearly twelve thousand pounds, besides Brook Cottage and grounds. She lost no time in putting her interests in the hands of a firm of lawyers, and as the will could not be disputed, though some distant relatives of the murdered man turned up and threatened to carry the matter into Chancery, though they were soon convinced that they had not a leg to stand on, and so gave it up, she was allowed to take possession of her property. But she immediately sold Brook Cottage with all its belongings.

More than a year passed, and nothing had been heard of Mellin. He had effectually disappeared. But I strongly suspected that she had some idea where he was, and I kept my eye upon her. As soon as the murdered man's estate was all wound up, and Mrs. Sharples had received all she was entitled to, she left the country, but I was on her track and shadowed her to Malaga, in Spain, where she joined the outlaw Mellin. The infatuation that induced her

to go to him, and which led to his betrayal, was truly remarkable. He had been living there for more than a year, disguised as an English clergyman. Immediately applied for his extradition, but before the necessary formalities could be carried out he had resolved upon a desperate course to cheat the law he had outraged. He took Mrs. Sharples out for a walk one morning. They wended their way to a beautiful cork wood in the environs of Malaga, and there he shot her, and then destroyed himself by blowing his brains out. Whether she had any knowledge of his intentions when she consented to go with him must ever remain a mystery ; but the dark tragedy seemed almost a fitting sequel to the foul murder of poor Mr. Norraway.

THE GREAT BANK FRAUDS.

BOLDNESS in crime very frequently ensures its success ; but lest those inclined to wrong-doing should be led away by this statement let me at once say, in a very emphatic manner, that crime, sooner or later, works the downfall of those who follow it. Few criminals indeed escape that doom which threatens them from the very moment that they take the first downward step. No one can thrive by wrong-doing, and the wrong-doer can know no real enjoyment and happiness. Like a wild and noxious animal of the woods, he must ever be on the alert lest he falls into a trap, or is taken by his enemies. His way ‘craves wary walking,’ and, as the saying is, he must sleep with one eye open. A criminal may be bold, he may be clever, and he may be cunning, but his life is a feverish one, he can enjoy no peace, and he is almost certain to get netted at last.

The foregoing remarks are introductory to the story I have to tell, and which will be found to fully justify what I have said. One of the boldest and most original frauds of the present century was that known as the ‘Great Bank Frauds.’ I have deemed it expedient not to mention the actual name of the bank that suffered, although many who read this will have little difficulty in recognising the one alluded to. I have

also changed the names of the criminals for the sake of their families. The Bank had a branch in the West End of London, and it was through this branch that the extraordinary swindles were committed. These frauds were of an elaborate nature, and required considerable preparation and the expenditure of capital. It will thus be seen they were not of an ordinary kind, nor were the men who perpetrated them ordinary criminals. They were all more or less well educated; they were all more or less shrewd, and they were all acquainted with the methods pursued by commercial houses in transacting their business. To these facts were due the temporary success they gained.

The frauds began by a man of good address and gentlemanly appearance driving up to the Bank one morning in a hansom, and requesting to be allowed to open an account. He came with a letter of introduction from a client of the Bank, and he gave his name as John Edward Brinton, and his address in a good part of Kensington. He said he had been living abroad for some years, and had only recently come to England. As all seemed satisfactory, he was allowed to open the account, and he deposited five hundred pounds. His signature was taken, he was provided with a pass and cheque book, and the business being settled he went away.

It will be seen at once that a man contemplating a fraud who was in possession of five hundred pounds must have had an eye to very big business, for five hundred pounds was not an insignificant capital for a thief to have in his possession.

In the course of a month Mr. Brinton had drawn out, in various sums, the whole of his five hundred pounds, with the exception of a very small balance.

But he then drove up to the Bank again, and deposited fifteen hundred pounds, and he told the Manager that he was going to Marseilles to open a commission agency there; and from his connection and the influence of his friends he expected to get a very large business together, and that probably he would have large transactions with the Bank. The Manager thanked him, and wished him every success in his undertaking, and then the enterprising Mr. Brinton went away, and for three weeks nothing more was heard of him, though he drew two or three small cheques on his account, which of course were duly paid. At the end of that time he forwarded from Marseilles two Bills of Exchange. One was for two thousand and seventy-two pounds and the other for three thousand pounds. The first was drawn by him on a firm of shipping agents in Marseilles, and was endorsed by 'Williams, Pocock, & Co., ship brokers, Leadenhall Street, London,' and the second was drawn by him on Williams, Pocock, & Co. themselves, and was without endorsement. Mr. Brinton requested that the Bank would discount both these bills and place the amount to his credit for trading purposes. This was done, and on the bills maturing they were duly met, and confidence on the part of the Bank was thoroughly established.

The artfulness of this little scheme will at once strike the reader, who will not fail also to note the amount of capital required by Brinton and his confederates to begin their system of fraud, which ultimately reached proportions that were truly gigantic.

Brinton having thus paved the way, grew bolder, and he forwarded a batch of bills, amounting in all to ten thousand pounds. Some of these were drawn on 'Williams, Pocock, & Co.,' and others on 'Richard

Errington Sykes, Esq.,' whose address was given at 'Hyde Park Gate.' These bills were also taken up at maturity, but others were immediately deposited for still larger amounts. To outsiders it will seem strange that suspicion was not aroused by this paper business, but, as a matter of fact, there was nothing at this time to arouse suspicion. An enormous amount of trading is done every day by means of Bills of Exchange; and as discounting is a very profitable branch of banking business, bankers readily take bills that they have no reason to suspect, and in the present instance Mr. Brinton's transactions seemed perfectly *bonâ fide* on the face of them. But what was calculated to prompt some inquiry was the depositing of new bills the moment the old ones had run their course, and the bills, always being drawn on and by the same people. The Bank, however, did not suspect, and all went on swimmingly.

The growth of Mr. Brinton's commercial transactions was now very rapid, and Bills of Accommodation and Bills of Exchange were poured in on the Bank, and Brinton drew cheques for large amounts against these bills. The cheques were cashed, not only in various parts of England, but also of the Continent. Of course the object of those who were engaged in this colossal fraud was to get as much money as possible from the Bank, and get it with all despatch, because the deception could not long be kept up. The bills deposited at this time and discounted by the Bank represented the enormous sum of two hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds, and against this amount Mr. Brinton drew three cheques, the first for fifty thousand pounds, which was duly honoured; the second for the same amount, which was also honoured; and the third for

twenty-five thousand. When the latter cheque was presented the Manager of the Bank sent a request to Brinton, who was still abroad, that he would like to have a personal interview with him, and the payment of the last cheque must be deferred until that interview had taken place.

It would have been thought that Mr. Brinton and his associates had done so well they would have been satisfied, but immunity from detection so far had made them bolder, and their limit had not yet been reached. Mr. Brinton accordingly came from Marseilles, and presented himself at the Bank. The Manager during the interview pointed out that, as he had already drawn such a large sum of money from the Bank, and had so many bills floating about in his name, the Directors would prefer, before entering into further transactions, to have some tangible security in hand. To this Mr. Brinton exclaimed with charming *naïveté*—

‘My dear Sir,—laying great emphasis on the ‘dear.’ ‘My dear Sir, if you suspect my solvency for a moment I should be only too pleased to place the most absolute and tangible security in your coffers. My transactions for some time have been of a very extensive character, and, apart from an exceedingly flourishing business in Marseilles, I have large investments in railway stock, and I will at once hand over to you bonds of the Pennsylvania State Railways of America representing nearly three hundred thousand pounds.’”

Of course the Manager intimated that, if that were done, the Directors would feel perfectly satisfied, and Mr. Brinton would be allowed to make further draws.

Mr. Brinton, who was exceedingly gushing and oppressively polite, shook the Manager’s hand with

great cordiality, and said that he would at once proceed to his brokers in the city, and return with the bonds in the course of two or three hours at the latest.

Mr. Brinton's manner, his general style, and apparent openness and frankness, were well calculated to inspire confidence. He spoke with great fluency, had a remarkable command of commercial phrases, facts and figures, and with great tact and skill he incidentally referred to so many people in high position with whom he said he was acquainted, that almost any one would have been deceived. Later on in the day he returned to the Bank, accompanied by a gentleman whom he represented as Mr. Benjamin Potter, his solicitor. Mr. Potter was a little man, with a hooked nose, a very bald head, small eyes, and a general suggestiveness about him of fusty deeds and mouldy documents. This gentleman produced from a black bag he carried, and which he guarded with great jealousy, a bulky package of railway bonds, of which he had a carefully prepared list drawn up with great accuracy and detail, and this list he presented to the Manager for his signature as an acknowledgment that the bonds had been duly deposited. Having gone over the documents and checked the list, the Manager signed the receipt, and the transaction so far being ended, the lawyer and Mr. Brinton drove off. The bonds were duly deposited in the strong room of the Bank, and all seemed well.

Within a fortnight of that time Mr. Brinton had drawn cheques to the value of nearly eighty thousand pounds, and then the bubble was exploded by that act of stupidity which, I have always insisted, is bound, sooner or later, to betray those who abandon themselves to crime.

One morning a young woman drove up to the Bank in a cab and presented an open cheque payable to bearer. The cheque was for a thousand pounds payable to Mr. Benjamin Potter or bearer, and on the back it bore Mr. Benjamin Potter's signature, while the name of the drawer was Brinton. So far all was formal and correct, but the cheque happened to come under the notice of the head cashier who knew of the transactions between Mr. Brinton, Mr. Potter, and the Bank in regard to the railway bonds, and he was naturally struck by the peculiarity of a lawyer of any standing having a cheque for so large a sum as a thousand pounds payable to bearer, and what was still more peculiar that the payee should have endorsed it, and handed it over to a flashily-dressed young woman for payment. There was something so unbusiness-like in the whole transaction that he went to the lady and said politely—

‘Madame, would you kindly tell me how this cheque came into your possession?’

The young lady was not prepared for the question. It disconcerted her, so that she became exceedingly red in the face, and was so evidently confused that the clerk's suspicions became more pronounced, and were not allayed by her answer—

‘You don't suppose I stole it, do you?’

‘I didn't insinuate such a thing,’ remarked the clerk blandly, ‘but still I must ask you to inform me how the cheque came into your possession?’

‘I shan't tell you,’ she cried snappishly.

‘Then I am afraid I must decline to pay the amount until I have communicated with Mr. Potter.’

Whereupon she demanded the cheque back, but the clerk declined to give it, and she flared up, pouring

out a torrent of abuse, and at last, with the exclamation that she would fetch a policeman, she flung herself out of the Bank, and, jumping into her cab, drove away.

The clerk knew that he had incurred a somewhat grave responsibility if the transaction should turn out to be all right, and so he lost no time in sending a messenger to Mr. Benjamin Potter's address, but in a little while the man returned with the astounding information that Mr. Potter had no offices at the address given, and was not even known in the neighbourhood. This discovery was well calculated to cause consternation in the Bank, and it did. A consultation was at once held, and it was determined to make some inquiries about the bonds and the bills held by the Bank. Of course all this ought to have been done before, in which case tremendous loss would have been prevented. Now it was shutting the stable door after the stealing away of the steed. Very little inquiry served to reveal the fact that the bonds were forged, and the bills were frauds, and that a gigantic swindle had been perpetrated.

Some of the Bank people wanted to hush the matter up, deeming it prudent that it should be kept from the public. But others were opposed to this, and they carried the day. The result being I was commissioned, with two or three other colleagues, to try and get on the track of the criminals. Of course the young woman who had presented the cheque was an accomplice, and she had given the alarm, so that the criminals had a start.

I soon found that the firm of 'Williams, Pocock, & Co.' was a mere bogus concern, and that 'Richard Errington Sykes, Esq.,' was no less mythical, and the

more I pursued my inquiries the more astounded I became, both as to the extent of the fraud and the ease with which the Bank had been defrauded.

Having got hold of the threads of this gigantic swindle, I started off for Marseilles with a full description of John Edward Brinton. Not that I expected to find him in that Mediterranean seaport, but I hoped to fall in with his spoor, as a hunter of big game would say. Nor was I mistaken. I found that he had really carried on a business, although of a limited nature; but he had suddenly shut his place up and disappeared. He had been living in great style in a villa residence situated in one of the most beautiful suburbs of Marseilles. I at once repaired to this villa. I found the servants still there wondering what had become of their master and mistress, so that for the first time I learned that there was a mistress. She was described to me as a very handsome young woman, a brunette, and, although born and brought up in England, she spoke French like a native. She had taken all her jewellery and other valuables with her. The house was superbly furnished, but I soon found that there was a bill of sale upon it. Mr. Brinton, in fact, had evidently prepared himself for the inevitable crash, and had got all the money he could. He had kept a banking account with the Credit Lyonnais, but a few days previous to my arrival he had drawn out every franc and closed the account.

The question now was, where had the gentleman gone to? Clever as he had proved himself to be, I did not despair that he had left some clue behind him. I felt sure, in my own mind, that he had not gone north, for that course would have placed him in the way of those who were so anxious to meet him. I therefore

got a list of every vessel that had left Marseilles during the week, and also ascertained the names of the passengers carried by the steamers, and I chuckled as I found that a Mr. and Mrs. Brinton had taken passage in the French mail boat *La Reine* for the Cape of Good Hope. Here again was an act of stupidity on the part of the criminal who had been clever enough to swindle a Bank out of nearly two hundred thousand pounds. Had he but taken passage under another name the probabilities are he would have escaped detection.

Finding that my gentleman had got clear so far, and as there was no other boat for the Cape from Marseilles for ten days, I started back for London, and I found that my colleagues had arrested a member of the bogus firm, Williams, Pocock, & Co. It was clear, however, that he was only one of the rank and file, and the thing was to lay hold of the ringleader, and, if possible, make him disgorge his ill-gotten gains. I was fortunate enough in getting a steamer for the Cape two days after my return to London, and, armed with a warrant for Mr. Brinton's arrest, I set off in pursuit.

The vessel in which I had taken passage was a fast boater, faster than the *La Reine*, and I made a calculation which made me hope that, given good luck, we should not be very far behind the French steamer. Nor was I wrong, for she only arrived five days before we did.

I found that Brinton had changed his name now that it was too late, and was staying with the lady at the principal hotel under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Percy Fitzwilliam. This was lofty, and certainly more aristocratic than Brinton.

I did not proceed to arrest the fugitive immediately,

as I was desirous, if possible, of learning something about his affairs, and so I engaged a room in the hotel, and soon scraped acquaintance with him. I found him to be a most fascinating man. He was polished, well educated, of a cheerful disposition, a good conversationalist, and had a fund of anecdote. He was a connoisseur of cigars, and knew how to dine, being a perfect *bon vivant*, as well as an epicure, and I thought to myself 'prison fare will go hard with you, my clever gentleman.'

Although he was clever and shrewd in many respects he was far from secretive. This is very often the case with criminals. He chatted freely about himself and his future plans. He told me that he had been in business in London, that he had been recently married, and that he and his wife were then on their way to the Mauritius, where he was going to buy an estate. His wife—she was really his wife—was much younger than he, and exceedingly handsome. But one could see with half an eye, as the saying is, that she was strong willed, and deep as a silent river. I soon came to the conclusion that she was fully acquainted with her husband's rascalities, for she manifested suspicion of me.

For some days I watched this precious couple very closely, and but little of their doings escaped me. I traced them one day to the principal Bank, where they remained some time. When they left I entered and sought an interview with the Manager, and, presenting my credentials and displaying the warrant, I inquired what was the business Brinton, *alias* Percy Fitzwilliam, had been engaged upon, and I found he had purchased, with Bank of England notes principally, various drafts on a Mauritius bank, amounting altogether to forty-

five thousand pounds. He had described himself as a merchant going out to the Mauritius to purchase an estate. I immediately applied to the Cape authorities for an attachment against this money, and that being granted I felt that the time for arrest had come, especially as a steamer was leaving for London in two days. Securing the assistance of four of the Cape police, I went back to the hotel. My gentleman and his wife were seated on the verandah that ran round the house, and commanded a view of the magnificent harbour and the superb mass of Table Mountain. They were enjoying a little luncheon, and seemed so gay and happy that I almost felt loath to disturb them. As it was I allowed them to finish their lunch, then keeping my men in the background, I approached, and bowing said—

‘The scene of this little drama must change, Mr. Brinton, and as I hold a warrant for your arrest, you must accompany me back to England.’

He turned deadly pale and sprang to his feet, and she, with a shrill, piercing scream, rose also, and flung her arms around his neck, and that act hampered his movements, so that he was not able to draw a revolver which we afterwards found in his pocket, every barrel of it loaded, although he made an effort to get it out. But my men rushed forward, and we secured him, separating his wife from him with difficulty, for she struggled desperately, and fought like a tigress. It was really a heartrending scene. His fortitude deserted him and he utterly broke down. It was something in the woman’s favour that she did not desert her husband in this dreadful hour, and so she returned to England with him.

From papers found in his possession we were enabled

to trace others of the gang and arrest them, and when the trial came on we were prepared with evidence to prove a most remarkable and gigantic system of fraud. Benjamin Potter, whose real name was the very ordinary one of Ridgway Jones, was a solicitor of rascally antecedents, and he had been struck off the rolls for malpractices. He had been instrumental in preparing the forged bonds. His cleverness was unmistakable, and therefore it was the more astounding that he should have been so lax in regard to the thousand pound cheque, which had been the means of betraying them. Brinton, however, who was an American by birth, and whose correct name was Silas Cleveland, was the prime mover in and organiser of the swindle. He was, therefore, sentenced to penal servitude for life. The lawyer got twenty years, and the others lesser terms. Cleveland's wife was in the Court when her husband was sentenced, and the scene was a very painful one.

Although a little over sixty thousand pounds of the money was recovered, the Bank was still a very heavy loser. What the exact amount was I do not know, for the Bank people would not disclose the actual figure, but it could not have been far short of a hundred thousand, and it is probable it was over that.

Feeling interested in Mrs. Cleveland, I managed to keep my eye on her for two or three years, during which time she lived in apartments at Barnsbury. Then I suddenly missed her, and ascertained that she had gone to America, and what became of her ultimately I don't know.

A NOTED IMPOSTOR.

SOME years ago the good people of Edinburgh were invited, by large and attractive posters on the walls, as well as by advertisements in the papers, to attend on a certain night at the Waterloo Rooms to hear the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A., discourse on 'Missionary Work in East Africa.' Every one who took an interest in missionary work was cordially and earnestly invited to attend. 'Admission free, but a collection will be made at the doors to aid the good work of spreading Christianity amongst the poor heathen. He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord.' So ran the advertisements which the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A., brought so prominently under the notice of the public.

There are few things that appeal so directly and with such force to the feelings of most people as that of spreading the Gospel amongst the heathen. It would almost seem as if some of these people were impressed with the idea that if they give every year a few shillings from their incomes for missionary work, they may be as careless as they like about themselves.

The Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A., was an utter stranger to Edinburgh—at least, so far as the general

public were concerned. Nor did any one seem to think it worth his while to inquire where he came from or where his church was. He had a striking name, and the 'M.A.' was imposing; and as there was nothing to pay, and a person could give to the collection what he liked, from a penny to a pound, the result was the rooms were crowded. The audience consisted principally of females—old ladies and young women and girls—with a sprinkling of benevolent-looking old gentlemen, with here and there a boy, who probably would infinitely rather have been at the circus sucking oranges than listening to the eloquence of the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll. Punctually at the advertised time—eight o'clock—the lecturer appeared on the platform, accompanied by a local tradesman, who had 'kindly consented to take the chair,' and a dapper little man with an eyeglass, a somewhat bald head, flowing whiskers, and a bland and smiling expression of countenance. The chairman having said a few words, usual on such occasions, the dapper little man proceeded to gabble in an unintelligible manner something about the expenditure in connection with the 'Driscoll Mission,' which, 'under the blessing of God,' had been the means of bringing no fewer than four thousand seven hundred and forty-two heathens to the fold of Christianity within a period of five years. This latter statement the dapper little man rendered distinctly enough, and it found great favour with the old ladies and young ones, while two of the benevolent old gentlemen said 'Hear, hear.' Then the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll began his discourse. He was a tall, handsome-looking man, with a long flowing beard, white, delicate hands, soft, noiseless manner that was suggestive of a pussy cat, and a clear, silvery voice.

He wore gold eyeglasses, and was attired in a very correct clerical garb.

The rev. gentleman impressed his audience before he spoke, for his appearance was striking, and his manner, pose, and style peculiarly attractive; and when he did begin to speak the capture of his audience was complete, and some of the young women uttered sighs that came from the heart, while several of the elder ones were heard to exclaim—‘What an exceedingly nice man to be sure.’

For a little more than an hour the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll held forth with almost burning eloquence. He pointed out how important it was that every Christian person should spare no endeavour to convert the heathens, and he dwelt with force and point upon the necessity of giving freely to this magnificent cause, ‘for,’ as he said in his peroration, ‘the expenses attending missionary work are great. The devoted men who go forth, risking their health and peace, and taking their lives in their hands, must be supported; and the expense of organising, of incidental items, and of making some provision for the widows and orphans of the noble servants of the Lord who, denying themselves all comforts and pleasures, go into the pestilential wilderness, too often to become victims to their zeal, are very great, and unless you give, and give freely, the work must cease.’

Of course this appeal told, and the reference to the widows and orphans melted some of the tender-hearted folk to tears. As the audience passed out the dapper little man stood at one door with a box and the Chairman at another, and gold, silver, and bank notes flowed into the boxes freely, and one nice grey-headed gentleman dropped in a cheque for twenty pounds.

The Rev. Langworthy Driscoll and his clerk stayed at one of the best hotels in Edinburgh. They had been there for two days, and it was noted, however zealous they might be in the cause of missionary work, they did not believe in mortifying the flesh. Their tastes were epicurean, and they indulged in the best the hotel afforded, including a bottle of choice champagne each night with their dinner.

The morning after the lecture the rev. gentleman and his clerk went out, and had not returned when night fell. This probably would not have excited any comment save for the trifling fact that they had forgotten to settle their little bill, amounting to nearly six pounds. When ten o'clock came, and silver-voiced Driscoll, M.A., and his dapper clerk were still *non est*, the landlord began to have some misgivings, which were more than justified when it was discovered that the well-worn portmanteau in Mr. Driscoll's room contained nothing more important or valuable than half-a-dozen bricks and a block of wood. Perhaps, with a keen sense of irony, the rev. gentleman left this block of wood to typify the heads of those who trusted him.

Late that night information was lodged at the head office, and as I was then in the Edinburgh force I was requested to look into the matter. There seemed no reason to doubt that a most impudent and barefaced swindle had been perpetrated, and now people began to ask who the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll was? How was it he hadn't come with letters of introduction, and wasn't it singular that no clergyman of eminence in the town was on the platform? Of course it was curious, but the gullibility and thoughtlessness of the public are astonishing. They are never wise until after the

event, and when the horse has been stolen away they proceed to bolt and bar the stable-door. Men like myself, who have to deal with the worst phases of human nature, know how easy it is for anyone with a good address, a plausible manner, and boldness, to defraud his fellows. Of course some tact and originality are needed, and if a swindler only has these he may flourish and live in clover for a time.

When I had gathered all the foregoing particulars I saw at once that I had to deal with an extraordinarily cool and clever rogue; and as I pondered over the matter it was obvious to me that this gentleman and his accomplice—the dapper clerk—were old and practised hands at swindling, and I did not feel altogether sure that I should be able to make their acquaintance for some time. I needed no oracle to tell me that they would not attempt the same method of swindling again, as they would run too great a risk. They were evidently gentlemen of great originality, and were hardly likely to be at a loss for some new means of squeezing the coin out of the purses of her Majesty's liege subjects.

No time was lost in circulating a description of these two accomplished impostors, but in the course of a conversation I had with the tradesman who had taken the chair, he said—

‘Do you know, Mr. Donovan, that I could not help thinking when I looked at Mr. Driscoll that his beard was not his own.’

‘Why did you think that?’ I asked.

‘Well, I noticed that there was something peculiar about it. It hadn't a natural appearance when you were close to it.’

‘Why did you not mention that at the time?’

‘Because I didn’t feel quite sure, and one is naturally chary of giving expression to suspicions unless they are well founded. Mr. Driscoll seemed so respectable and was such a gentleman that it was difficult to believe he was a swindler.’

I was not disposed to deny that difficulty, but there was no difficulty in my mind in believing that this tradesman, who had been so easily gulled, was a somewhat simple-minded person, and lacking in that caution which is supposed to be a characteristic of natives of the North. Nor did I doubt that the surmise about the beard being false was correct. Mr. Driscoll with his long flowing beard and Mr. Driscoll without would be a totally different person in appearance; and it seemed equally conclusive to me that so polished and accomplished a swindler would have studied the art of disguising himself, and would adapt his appearance to the character he was going to play.

It is almost superfluous to say the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A., did not figure in the Clergy List, and the ‘Driscoll Mission’ was as much a myth as the ancient gentleman in the moon.

My next step was to examine the room the rev. humbug had occupied at the hotel. Of course, the bricks and block of wood were not likely to afford me much clue, but the portmanteau might. In this I was wrong, however, for it was an old battered thing, evidently brought for the occasion, and was not worth five shillings. The dapper little man had left a hand-bag behind which was of more value than the portmanteau, being nearly new, though originally it could not have cost more than a couple of pounds. In the fireplace were some scraps of paper, and these I picked up and put together with great care, and found that

they made up an hotel bill, the hotel being situated at Torquay, and a visiting card with this name on—

The Hon. Cecil Clinton, M.A.

Brooks' Club.

I had an instinctive feeling that the Hon. Cecil Clinton, M.A., and the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A., were identical, and that one name was as false as the other. It was clear that this accomplished rascal was fond of M.A., and I thought to myself—'That M.A. will prove your ruin, my fine fellow.'

I lost no time in communicating with the proprietor of the hotel in Torquay, and in satisfying myself that the Hon. Cecil Clinton, M.A., was a myth, for his name did not appear in the directory, and he was not known at Brooks'. The description given of him by the proprietor of the hotel was that he was a tall gentlemanly man, with good address, a very plausible manner, with light brown curly hair, and a clean shaven face. He was accompanied by a valet, a little dapper man, who wore spectacles, and had bushy, dark hair. The Hon. Cecil Clinton had paid his hotel bill, but had cashed a cheque through a tradesman for fifty pounds, and the cheque had been returned dishonoured, and the tradesman was exceedingly anxious to learn the whereabouts of the hon. gentleman.

This information served to convince me that I had to do with no ordinary or vulgar swindler, and one who would be very difficult to capture. But this very fact put me on my metal, and I resolved that, if it was possible, and I did not doubt the possibility, I would become much better acquainted with the rascal.

The cheque which I have referred to as having been put into one of the boxes after the lecture in Edinburgh was speedily cashed, and I found it was endorsed

‘Langworthy Driscoll.’ The handwriting was somewhat peculiar, and I got a fac-simile of it for further use. I compared this writing with that on the cheque, which he had cashed in Torquay, and I found they were identical. It was ascertained that this polished impostor and his accomplice had gone from Torquay to Exeter, where he had passed the night at an hotel, describing himself as Colonel Hedley Woodruff. He dined sumptuously, hired horses for himself and ‘servant,’ borrowed five pounds from the landlady, and then left, forgetting to settle his little accounts. From Exeter he was traced to London, where we lost sight of him. Like Macbeth’s witches, he seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Of course I was annoyed. Who would not have been so? But then I knew that I had no ordinary criminal to deal with, but a fellow who was capable of taxing the cleverness of the most brilliant detective the world has produced. Such a man had brought swindling to a fine art, and the difficulty was to tell where he would turn up again. It was evident he was fond of travelling, and he bestowed his patronage with a liberal hand—now here, now there. One week he might be at Land’s End, the next at John O’Groat’s. Then again his polish, his plausibility, his good appearance, and his unblushing effrontery made it easier for him to secure victims, for no one suspected him. It was these very qualities which had enabled him to so successfully throw dust in the eyes of the Edinburgh folk as the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll, M.A. I had faith, however, in my theory, which I had proved to be correct in so many cases—that was, that in spite of his cleverness he would some day trap himself by an act of stupidity.

Some months passed away, and I heard nothing more of this very remarkable gentleman. Descriptions of him had been circulated all over the kingdom, but he was capable of assuming so many characters that description was not likely to avail much, and this was proved to be the case by no tidings being obtained of him.

Let it not be supposed that because months had passed I had forgotten him. I never abandoned any quest when once I had taken it up until I had proved beyond all question of doubt that it was hopeless. I knew how to watch and wait, and I could not conceive it possible that this gentleman could avoid walking into the law's net at last, considering how widely the net had been spread. Naturally, I was desirous that mine might be the hand to take him, but I should have been glad to hear of his arrest, no matter by whom. I felt pretty sure that such an accomplished scoundrel would have his head quarters in the Metropolis. Such men usually affect the capital of a country. The capital affords better shelter, and they are less likely to attract attention.

It was about six months after the Rev. Langworthy Driscoll's exploit in Edinburgh that the exigencies of my duties took me to London, where I was likely to be detained for some time. It must not be assumed that I considered Langworthy Driscoll his right name. I was sure that he had as many *aliases* as there are days in a month, and he was too wide awake to the safety there was in constant change of name not to avail himself of it. If he was a Rev. one week he would be a Colonel the next, and an Honourable the week after that. I knew, therefore, that it was useless to try and trace him by his name, but still I kept my eyes open.

About two months after my arrival in London I was glancing over one of the daily papers, when my attention was arrested by an advertisement setting forth that Mr. Harold Hinckcliffe, M.A., would lecture in a certain hall in Hampstead on 'Some Martyr Missionaries, in aid of the building fund for —— Church.'

A smile of peculiar gratification must have spread itself over my face as I read that advertisement, for something told me that here was my gentleman at last. The M.A. and the martyr missionaries betrayed him. Those two letters must have had some strange fascination, and it was evident he had a weakness for missionaries.

On the night of the lecture I was one of the audience in the hall. The chairman, who was a clergyman in the district, introduced Mr. Hinckcliffe, who was a tall, gentlemanly man, with a bald head, a clean shaven face, and who wore blue spectacles. I listened to his lecture with great interest. His voice was as clear as a bell, his delivery was fluent, his style that of a practised elocutionist, while he displayed an intimate knowledge of his subject.

As soon as the lecture was over I went round to the ante-room at the back of the hall, where the lecturer was in the act of putting on a superb topcoat lined with fur and trimmed with sable.

'Good evening, Mr. Langworthy Driscoll,' I said.

'Sir!' he exclaimed with perfect coolness, so that I thought for a moment I had made a mistake.

'I beg your pardon,' I returned, 'I mean the Hon. Cecil Clinton.'

He paused in the act of thrusting an arm into the sleeve of his coat, looked at me fixedly for a moment

through his blue spectacles, then smiled contemptuously, and remarked—

‘Have you been drinking, my good fellow?’

I bowed, apologised for my mistake, and said—

‘Perhaps I am addressing Colonel Hedley Woodruff?’

He turned to the rev. chairman, who had been looking on in surprise, and said with perfect self-possession and the utmost coolness—

‘Who is this fellow, sir?’

‘What do you mean?’ exclaimed the clergyman irascibly, addressing me.

‘You shall know directly,’ I answered.

Then turning to the lecturer, I asked at what college he had taken his M.A.

‘At Cambridge,’ he answered, for the first time showing some anger, and colouring up a little, thus giving himself away.

‘I’ve every reason to suspect you of being an impostor,’ I remarked.

‘Impossible,’ cried the clergyman. ‘Why, he lives in the neighbourhood, and is highly respected.’

I was not to be put off my trail, for I felt sure that Mr. Hinckcliffe was the man I wanted. I noted, too, that he was a little uneasy and anxious to get away, so I said—

‘My name is Donovan. I am a detective, and I intend to arrest you.’

He turned deadly pale now, and his presence of mind forsook him, so that I no longer had the slightest doubt I had run my man to earth. At first he professed indignation, then showed anger, and at last became obstreperous; but with the assistance of the policeman on duty at the door I secured him, thrust him into a cab, and took him to the nearest station,

He proved to be the right person, and one who had been wanted for years. He belonged to a very good family, and I refrain from mentioning his real name. He had been educated at a public school, and had been sent to Cambridge to study for the Church, but had been expelled his College for robbing a fellow student. His friends cast him off, and from that moment he took to swindling, ultimately associating himself with the dapper little man, who was the clerk in Edinburgh, the servant somewhere else. This man, however, had died, and Hinckcliffe, as I will call him, had inveigled a widow with money into marrying him, although he had a wife living, and he had settled at Hampstead. He was remanded from time to time, in order that some fresh case might be proved against him, until at last the list became so long that it was not necessary to prove any more, and he was sentenced to penal servitude for life. But prison living and prison discipline so told upon him that he only lived five years after his sentence. It was pitiable that such talents as he undoubtedly possessed should have been wasted as they were. I ought to mention that he had never taken his M.A. degree, but the letters seemed to have an irresistible fascination for him, and it might be said they proved his ruin.

A NICE YOUNG WOMAN.

PERHAPS I need not inform the reader that the adjective 'nice' as used in connection with the young lady who figures in this story is meant to be, as my lamented friend the late Artemus Ward would have said—sarkastikul. It is necessary that I should begin my narrative with a sort of prologue. Mr. Thomas Whiffingham was a draper in a large way of business in the South of London. His premises were extensive, and included many departments. The exigencies of the business necessitated the employment of a number of young women. Some of these slept on the premises, and some left for their homes when the business closed for the day. Each department was controlled by a foreman or forewoman, and though every means were taken to prevent pilfering they were not always effectual. At last it came to pass that a series of extraordinary robberies followed one on the other. They were extraordinary in respect to the manner in which they were executed, for they absolutely seemed to defy detection. Nor were they confined to any department. Had that been the case it would have been more easy perhaps to have pounced upon the culprit. But with a fine sense of discrimination the thief or thieves selected such articles as were easily portable, and which in small bulk con-

tained considerable value, such, for example, as silk stockings, handkerchiefs, and ribbons. But higher game than this was subsequently flown at, and three or four very valuable seal-skin jackets were carried off, together with a costly pair of velvet curtains, some tablecloths of an expensive kind, and similar articles. This series of robberies extended over a considerable period, and for a time passed unnoticed. But as soon as it was known that a thief was at work means were adopted to detect the guilty person, though without avail. One thing was certain—as plain as a pikestaff, in fact—the robber was some one in the employ of Mr. Whiffingham. This was clear, because no outsider could have got access to the things without at once betraying himself.

So serious did the loss become that the proprietor at last employed three or four detectives to remain on the premises all day, from the time the shop opened in the morning till the closing hour at night. Then the young women and men who left were subject to keen scrutiny, but the result was failure.

It will readily be understood that these mysterious robberies were a source of great annoyance to the employés generally no less than to the proprietor, for it is far from pleasing for a body of people to feel that they are resting under suspicion when they know they have nothing to fear and nothing to be ashamed of. But this annoyance did not elucidate the mystery, although the people in the establishment combined in their efforts to root out the black sheep from their midst, and, as is generally the case in such circumstances, some really innocent people were at first suspected and then accused, but when it came to a question of proof that was altogether wanting, and

the accusers found themselves in a somewhat unenviable position.

At last the robberies suddenly ceased, having extended over a period of several months. Not without intermission, however, and that served to baffle those who were so anxious to find out the guilty person. For when the intermission occurred the vigilance was relaxed, and then in a little while the bold thief commenced operations again.

When four weeks had elapsed, and there had been no renewal of the depredations, the people began to breathe a little more freely, and then it was remembered that the stoppage was coincident with the discharge of a young woman named Adelaide Parker, who had by no means been a favourite with her brother and sister employés. She had entered the establishment as an apprentice, never having been out before. She had come from a little village in Sussex, where her people occupied a humble position, her father being a labourer, while her mother kept a small general shop. She was one of a numerous family of brothers and sisters. She bore the character of being a wayward and intractable girl, though it was not supposed that there was anything vicious in her disposition. She was exceedingly good-looking, which was a misfortune for her, as her vanity led her to believe that she ought to occupy a high position in life, and dress in silks and satins at least. How she came to be employed by Mr. Whiffingham was through an advertisement. He advertised for apprentices. She applied amongst others, and as she was a smart girl, with fine figure and face, she was considered to be an eligible person, and she gave as a reference the minister of her native parish. That gentleman stated

candidly that she was intractable and wayward, and added to these drawbacks were vanity and discontent with her lot in life. 'But,' he added, 'I think she has the making of a good girl in her. She has attended my church and been a teacher in the Sunday school, and if she is kept well in hand I believe she will be all right. I shall be very glad to hear that she has got employment. It will be a great assistance to her mother and father, who have to struggle very hard to support their large family.'

On the strength of what this gentleman said, Mr. Whiffingham decided to engage her, and she accordingly entered his establishment as a probationer. Her good looks soon attracted the attention of the young men, and she proved, young as she was, that the art of flirtation came natural to her. With the young women of the establishment she did not get on at all well, for she was presuming, arrogant, and insolent. Moreover, she lacked perseverance, and was far from industrious. The result was, when her probationary term expired, she was discharged. As I have already stated, with her going the robberies ceased. But a month elapsed before it occurred to any one that probably she might be able to throw light on what had been so obscure as to baffle all scrutiny.

At this stage of the affair I was asked to look into the matter, and make some inquiries about Miss Adelaide Parker. I found that she had gone back to her parents in Sussex, and I could discover nothing that would have justified me in accusing her of the thefts, although what I learned about her led me to the conclusion that she had the makings of a criminal in her, and that her course was likely to be a criminal

one, unless she was taken in hand very firmly by some one who was capable of really influencing her.

Thus then the matter ended. Mr. Whiffingham was a considerable loser, but he had to grin and bear his loss; and the delinquent got off scot free.

Nearly a year later I was riding in a 'bus one afternoon coming from the East end, my destination being Whitehall. Seated opposite to me was a young and very attractive-looking woman, well and even fashionably dressed. As I looked at her I thought to myself, surely I know that face. It seemed familiar to me, and yet I could not recall where I had seen it. At last I came to the conclusion that I was mistaken, and I dismissed her from my mind, until suddenly it flashed upon me that she was Adelaide Parker. Then I became interested in her again, and began to study her. I noted that she wore rings on her fingers; that she had a gold watch and chain, and other adornments not in keeping with her station in life, unless she had married a man with money who could afford to dress her well. The possibility of that I had, of course, to admit, for there were plenty of men with money who would have been attracted by her good looks. Nevertheless, my curiosity was so far aroused that I resolved to shadow her for a little and find out something about her.

When the 'bus reached Charing Cross Miss Parker alighted, and so did I. It was evident that she had an assignation, for she looked anxiously about, and then commenced to promenade the pavement in a restless way. About half an hour later a well-dressed man alighted from a 'bus coming from the West end, and I saw Adelaide Parker rush up to him, and what

was my amazement, as I caught sight of his face, to recognise in him a notorious and most expert pick-pocket who had been several times convicted.

‘So, so,’ thought I, ‘here is a discovery. That young lady is on the high road to ruin, as I predicted twelve months ago she would be.’

The man’s name was John Wilson. Or rather, that was the name he had been convicted under, though it was thought not to be his real name ; and he had gone under innumerable aliases. As the fellow knew me, I

pt out of sight, but resolved not to leave his track until I had learned what his little game was, and what connection my lady had with him.

They walked up and down for some minutes engaged in earnest conversation. Then they hailed a passing hansom, and got in and drove down Whitehall. I was fortunate in securing another hansom within a few minutes, and I told the driver to keep the other vehicle in view at all hazards.

All unconscious that they were followed, Mr. John Wilson and Miss Adelaide Parker had not given their driver any instructions to drive rapidly, that is, more rapidly than usual. But as every one knows the London hansoms generally go at a good pace, so in a short time the leading cab reached the classic precincts of Pinlicko, and in one of the quiet streets of that questionable neighbourhood it drew up before a house, where the lady and gentleman alighted. The cabman was paid and dismissed, and then Mr. Wilson and Miss Parker mounted the steps, and he, drawing a latch key from his pocket, opened the door, proving that he was living there. In another moment they had both disappeared, closing the door behind them ; and I felt then I had made a discovery. It was

obvious to me that Parker had linked her fortunes to the gaol bird Wilson.

I was compelled, by the nature of my engagements, to leave them for that day, but I was resolved to learn something more about them, and in the course of the week I found out that they were lodging at the house under the name of Mr. and Mrs. Winton. They had good apartments, for which they paid two guineas a week, and Mr. Winton was supposed to be something in the city. They had been living there for about six months.

Knowing, as I did, that Wilson was a member of the light-fingered fraternity, and as a criminal hopelessly incurable, I was perfectly sure that he was training Adelaide Parker in the same course of life. I was so far interested in her that I was anxious, if at all possible, to rescue her before she had gone too far on the road to perdition. I therefore laid myself open to find out as much as possible of her movements, and so it chanced that one day I saw her leave her lodgings and followed her. She got into a 'bus going West, and I became a fellow passenger, and watched her keenly, deeming it more than probable that she was bent on a little expedition, from which she hoped to return somewhat richer than she went. Nor was I mistaken. In the course of the journey a stout, middle-aged, fashionably-dressed woman entered the vehicle, and sat next to Parker. The new comer, as she entered the 'bus, had a purse in her hand, but as soon as she had seated herself in her seat and arranged her skirts she put this purse into her pocket, which was on the side next to Parker.

'Now,' I thought, 'the time has come for developments.' I had noticed Parker's eye greedily follow

that purse, and ten minutes later I saw her hand deftly inserted in the lady's pocket, then withdrawn with something in it.

A minute or two later Parker stopped the 'bus and went out.

'Madam,' said I to the lady, 'feel in your pocket quickly, and tell me if you have lost anything.'

She thrust her hand into her pocket, and then, with an exclamation, informed me that her purse was gone.

I sprang out. Parker had got some yards away, but I went after her, and, seizing her by the arm, said—

'So, Miss Adelaide Parker, I've caught you at last.'

She turned round on me with flashing eyes and well-assumed indignation, stoutly denying that her name was Parker, and demanding to know what I meant by insulting her in such a way.

I told her that she had a purse in her pocket that did not belong to her, at which she howled out a defiant denial. By this time the robbed lady had joined us, and was exceedingly wrathful; and as a crowd had gathered, I hailed a four-wheeler and put both women in, taking care to see that my young woman did not get rid of the purse. I drove her at once to Bow Street and charged her with pocket-picking, and as soon as the charge was taken she was searched, and, sure enough, the purse was found upon her, and as it contained a considerable sum of money, the lady from whom it had been stolen was very thankful to have her property.

As I had now brought Adelaide Parker within the grip of the law, I obtained a warrant to search her apartments. I found Mr. Wilson at home, for though he had read in the papers, no doubt, of his hopeful

pupil's capture, he had not expected the search warrant. He was, therefore, much surprised to see me, and was disposed to be obstreperous, but I convinced him that it would be decidedly to his advantage to remain quiet, and he therefore confined his indignation to a string of epithets not usually indulged in by polite and well-bred people. However, as hard words break no bones, I proceeded calmly with my work, and was rewarded with unmistakable evidence of the extensive trade that Wilson and his partner had been carrying on, for purses of various kinds were found in large numbers in an old trunk. But I discovered more than this, I discovered carefully wrapped up in paper, at the bottom of a box, a pair of handsome velvet curtains, which I at once suspected formed part of the property stolen from Mr. Whiffingham.

My search completed, although I had got no evidence that would enable me to legally convict Wilson, I felt that I had a strong case against Adelaide Parker, and seeking an interview I taxed her point blank with having committed the extensive pilferings at Mr. Whiffingham's. Of course, she denied at first, until I told her I had evidence which was clear as day, and I said that, if she would make a clean break of it, I should, so far as I could, get a light sentence passed for the pocketpicking, as she had not been convicted before. Thereupon she poured forth a flood of tears, called herself a dreadfully wicked girl, and said that, if she could only get free, she would lead a good life henceforth. Then she told me that it was she who had robbed Mr. Whiffingham at the instigation of an old woman whose acquaintance she had promiscuously made, and by whom she was subsequently introduced to the man Wilson. This woman, who had since died,

prompted her to steal the articles, and Parker was in the habit of getting up in the dead of night and descending to the shop, where she procured the articles she wanted. She then carried them to a closet where there was a small window that opened on to a quiet street at the back of the premises, and through this window she lowered the things by means of string, and the old woman was ready to receive them, the hour at which the robbery was to take place having been previously settled between them.

After some time Parker saw reason to think the old woman was dealing unfairly with her, and she began to carry things out herself by fastening them round her body. She had thus taken out the curtains, one at a time, and she had kept them, so she told me, because she expected some day to get a house of her own, and she had taken a great fancy for those curtains. This story was very sad, as showing the girl's artfulness and depraved nature, but she seemed so thoroughly repentant that I got a charitable lady to interest herself in the case, and she promised to take Parker into a house if a lenient sentence was passed. The result was the girl got off with six months, and at the expiration of that time the lady received her, and placed her in an Institution, where she had the chance of beginning a new life and doing well. Unhappily, however, the criminal instincts were too deeply ingrained, and a fortnight later Miss Parker suddenly disappeared, and with her a considerable amount of property.

Of course I was informed of this ingratitude, and, as may be supposed, I was greatly annoyed, as I had been instrumental in getting the wretched girl into the Institution. My efforts to trace her, however,

proved of no avail for nearly three months, when I happened to hear of her whereabouts through a female prisoner in Newgate, and I was thus enabled once more to bring Miss Parker within the influence of the law; and this time she was sentenced to a year's imprisonment.

During the time that she was serving this term circumstances took me abroad, and when I returned her sentence had expired, and she had been discharged. What became of her, or where she went to, I did not know, but some three years later I read one morning in a newspaper that a young woman named Adelaide Wilson—though Wilson was supposed to be an assumed name—had been arrested on a charge of strangling her child, aged two years. The combination of the names Adelaide and Wilson struck me, and I asked myself whether this could be my former acquaintance, Adelaide Parker. I therefore made inquiries, and found that it was too surely so. From robbery the wretched girl had gone on to murder. In a fit of passion one night, because her child annoyed her by screaming, she choked it to death by putting her hands round its throat. The evidence brought forward at the trial proved that she had, since her previous release from prison, led a very depraved career, going from bad to worse, until she destroyed the life of her own offspring. Evidence was forthcoming which left no shadow of doubt that she had committed the crime, and the Judge who tried her sentenced her to penal servitude for life.

THE STOLEN BANK NOTES.

MISS SARAH DAVIES was a lady of—as the French would say—a certain age. That is a polite way of intimating that a lady is no longer young. It would ill become me to state how many summers and winters had passed over the fair Davies' head, but I shall be betraying no secrets if I say she was a spinster. She was tall and gaunt, with high cheek bones, iron-grey hair, and very little of it, and that little twisted into stiff wiry curls that dangled about the sides of her face. Her figure was flat, angular in outline, and suggestive of the 'lean and hungry' species of human kind. She had long thin hands and wrists, which were usually clothed in black net mittens. Her dress was invariably black, faded and rusty, and her boots might have been considered serviceable even by a tramp. It was almost impossible to look upon her face without feeling that she had just swallowed a dose of vinegar. Its very sourness set one's teeth on edge.

If the above is not a very flattering or attractive portrait of the lady I am not to blame for that. I have endeavoured to be true to nature, and could not paint her in any other colours. Perhaps I may remark, by way of a finishing touch, that Miss Davies had a cold grey eye, an eye that at once brought Coleridge's

‘Ancient Mariner’ to the mind, and her nose was of the parrot order of architecture.

Miss Davies was the survivor of four sisters and two brothers, who had all been more or less eccentric. Each of these sisters and brothers had possessed a snug income, and each had been miserly, and each dying left his or her proportion to be divided amongst the survivors, until at last the whole came into possession of Miss Sarah Davies, who thus enjoyed something like two thousand a year. With such a sum how much good might a person do who has few ties and is charitably inclined? But the lady in question, while having only one tie, to which I shall refer directly, was not charitably inclined. The miser’s instincts were strong in her, and she loved money for money’s sake. What a homily one might read by taking that sentence for a text, and, alas, how many people do love money for money’s sake. But it is not my purpose to sermonise. I must simply speak of Miss Davies as she was known to be and as I found her. She was parsimonious, and though she might have revelled in luxury she denied herself almost common necessities. The tie I have alluded to was the son of a cousin of hers; none of her own sisters and brothers had been married. The cousin died young, and was followed speedily by her husband; and their only child, then only a few years old, being left without guardians, Miss Davies took a fancy to him, and charged herself with his bringing up. His name was Charles Delanney, and his youthhood, passed under such guardianship, was not a very bright one. The whole of Miss Davies’ money was invested in Government stock, and every three months she received her dividends at the Bank of England. These dividends usually amounted to

close on five hundred pounds, and she received the whole of this not inconsiderable sum in brand new crisp Bank of England notes. There is a fascination about a new Bank of England note which may be said to be the handsomest bank note in the world. The fascination was irresistible to the lady, and she invariably took eight fifty pound notes, and the balance in tens and fives.

Now, it will not unnaturally be asked what did this extraordinary person do with her bank notes? Well, many people, no doubt, over and over again, asked that question, and it is equally probable that not a few would have liked to find out. But the fact is Miss Davies had all the attributes of the true miser. She was cunning and secretive, and her ways and habits were mysterious. It fell to my lot, however, to find out where the notes went to, and presently I shall place the information in possession of the reader, but I must tell my story in a circumstantial and straightforward way.

Another of peculiar Miss Davies' peculiarities was this. On dividend day she took her nephew with her to the Bank, and at the time the incident occurred that I am about to relate Charlie Delanney was just twenty years of age. He was not a bad looking young fellow, was naturally shrewd, and not at all tainted with his relative's miserly proclivities.

It had been her habit for years always, on dividend day, to treat herself and Charlie to what for her, and I suppose for him, was a good dinner, and she always went to a particular dining place not far from the Bank. She was not a welcome customer by any means, for she gave a good deal of trouble. She took a long time to decide what she would have, and would haggle

about the price of everything. She always had with her a reticule, one of the old-fashioned sort, such as were used by ladies some years ago. In this she carried her roll of notes, and she looked after her precious reticule with an anxious solicitude, begotten by greed.

On these festive occasions, which occurred four times a year, she indulged in a pint of old ale, for which she had a weakness, and after dining she took a little drop of gin, for which she had another weakness. And it was said that the pint of old ale and the 'leettle drop of gin' made the old lady *ému*, to use a French word, which is somewhat better than its near English equivalent—frisky.

One severe winter's day, when the mud in the London streets was of the consistency of pea soup, and the atmosphere was sodden with swirling sleet, Miss Davies and Charles Delanney went to the Bank in Threadneedle Street for the dividends, and having got the money they proceeded to the dining rooms referred to, and there, after much weighty discussion, many heart-burnings about the price of the delicacies ordered, the dinner was partaken of, and the lady had her pint of old ale and little drop of gin as usual, while she was extravagant enough to treat her relative to a bottle of ginger beer.

On leaving the restaurant snow was falling fast, a high wind was blowing, the streets were in a terrible condition, and the cold was piercing. Miss Davies, however, being in that condition which I have described as *ému* seemed indifferent to the atmospheric conditions, disagreeable as they were, and she proposed tramping through the slush and snow to her residence, a small house in Brixton. To this proposal

her ward offered a protest, and suggested a cab. But such a sybaritic piece of extravagance as that was calculated to throw her into a fit of apoplexy; though, after much argument, she decided to compromise the matter by taking a 'bus. They had to wait some little time, as most of the 'busses as they came up were full. But at last they did manage to get seats, and in due course arrived at their destination.

Almost as soon as they entered the house, Miss Davies, who confessed afterwards that she had 'nodded a little in the 'bus,' opened her reticule to see if the precious notes were all right, when to her amazement, her consternation, and her horror, she found that they had flown. That is, they were not in the bag. The discovery almost sent the lady into fits, and she raved about the loss of her money, and invoked the wrath of the Lord on 'the despicable wretch who had dared to rob a poor, lone, and unprotected woman.' But where *were* the notes? That was the question. She vowed that they were in the reticule at the restaurant, and also when she got into the 'bus. The audacious malefactor, therefore, must have been one of her fellow passengers in that hateful 'bus, and she railed at Charles Delanney for having persuaded her to ride in such 'a filthy vehicle,' more especially knowing, as he must have known, that 'busses were 'always filled with thieves.' Charlie pleaded ignorance on this point, but she declared that if he did not know he ought to have known, and to her a want of knowledge was unpardonable. She then insisted on his going with her to do all sorts of things. Every police station in London was to be informed, the whole business of the great city, in fact, was to be brought to a standstill till a search was made for the desperate and unutterably

wicked being who had relieved the 'poor lone woman' of her bank notes.

The young man, however, did not fall in with her views, and resolutely declined to stir out again. He said he had had enough of tramping about in the wet, and that he was cold and tired. At this refusal Miss Davies was exceeding wroth, and started off by herself in quest of the missing notes, and soon after Charlie went out too. She was absent some three or four hours, but her quest was as bootless as that of Sir Lancelot for the Holy Grail. She had, however, reported her loss at Scotland Yard, and as I happened to be on the staff at the time I was requested to look into the matter.

I lost no time in calling on Miss Davies at her house in Brixton. It was a small cottage in what was then a lane, now a handsome street. The house was miserably furnished, and the room into which she took me was cold and dismal as a dungeon. She told me the story in a most circumstantial way. But the little details about the dinner, etcetera, I learned through another channel; for, as I have repeatedly said, it was my habit always to begin at the very beginning of things, and having heard her story, which was told with a great deal of virulence and much pouring out of the vials of wrath on all mankind, I proceeded to the Bank to get the number of the notes. I found that she was well known at the Bank, and was looked upon as a very eccentric old woman. I then proceeded to the restaurant where she dined, and there I learned a good many interesting particulars about her. In the neighbourhood where she lived people referred to her as 'a miserly old cat.' This was more forcible and expressive than charitable. Moreover, it was, as it seemed to me, a libel on the whole of the

feline race, for there is no evidence to justify calling a cat a miser. However, this is by the way. But there was one remark that was made by a very garrulous old woman, which set me pondering. She said, in speaking of Miss Davies and Charlie Delanney—and said it with much bitterness—

“There’s that lad of her’s, too. I wonder he stays with such an old wretch. I’m not at all surprised at him stopping out at night as he does, and I know, if I were in his place, I’d have every penny of her money I could lay my hands on.’

As I have said, this remark set me pondering, and I determined to learn something about Mr. Charles Delanney’s habits. He had for some time been a clerk in the office of a tea merchant in Mincing Lane, but he had left owing to a quarrel he had with one of his superiors about coming late to business in the morning.

‘Was he honest?’ I asked.

‘Oh, yes, we have nothing to say against him on that point.’

Pushing my inquiries further, I found that Mr. Delanney had a good many companions of about his own age, and that he was accounted ‘a jolly good fellow, with plenty of tin.’ This set me pondering still more, and naturally I asked myself where he got the ‘tin’ from? Then I made a further discovery. He had a sweetheart, a Miss Barbara Heywood. It is not necessary to say much about this young lady, beyond that she was no better than she ought to have been, and that she occupied apartments in rather a good quarter of Chelsea, that she dressed well and had plenty of jewellery. I therefore became interested in knowing what were Mr. Delanney’s special attractions for this young woman, seeing that he was

utterly dependant, as I understood, on his relative, and had been out of a situation for some time.

Armed with the foregoing particulars, my next step was to have some talk with Delanney, but not in the presence of his foster-mother.

Having led him on to speak of himself, I asked him whether Miss Davies made him an allowance?

‘An allowance!’ he cried mockingly. ‘Yes, the wretched old screw gives me a shilling a week, and starves me in the bargain.’

‘Well,’ I remarked, ‘you must have the conjuror’s power of turning the weekly shilling into pounds, seeing what you do with it.’

‘What do you mean?’ he asked quickly, and turning pale.

‘Well, I mean that you keep up such good style away from your home that you must have other means besides Miss Davies’ weekly shilling.’

‘Where do you suppose I’m to get other means from? I haven’t a soul in the world who would give me a penny.’

‘Ah, very unfortunate,’ I remarked.

‘Deuced unfortunate,’ he snarled. ‘I wouldn’t live with this old witch another day if it were not that I expect to get her money when she goes off the hooks.’

‘Perhaps you will get some of it before she does?’ I suggested.

‘Not with her free will, I tell you.’

‘Now, what’s your opinion about the stolen notes? Who do you imagine took them?’

‘How can I tell you? You don’t suppose I took them, do you?’

‘Well, I’ve heard of a stranger thing than that,’ I

replied, and I saw that this little shaft went home. He seemed to wince, and there was an uneasy, scared expression in his face. My suspicions were strengthening, but I wanted something more tangible to go upon, and I asked him quickly—‘Did you visit Miss Barbara Heywood on the night that the notes were stolen?’

He turned very white at this, and stammered out a ‘no,’ but, on my putting the question more pointedly, he said yes, he had seen her.

As he was disposed to resent any further questioning, I asked him nothing more, but with much bitterness he began to tell me how miserable he was with Miss Davies. He said that she made his life not worth living, that she did not want him to be as other young men were, but tried to imbue him with her own parsimony and miserly habits. I asked him why he had not emigrated or tried to better himself somehow, and he told me he had often thought of emigrating, but she would not hear of it, and vowed that if he did she would not leave him a penny of her money.

I really felt sorry for him, for it was sad to see so young a man under the influence of such a woman. Of course, it will be said that he should have displayed more spirit, and have left her. But those who think that should remember that he had no trade or profession, no relatives, and absolutely no prospects but ultimately getting his foster-mother’s money. She stuck close enough to it while she lived, but she gave him to understand that he should have it at her death, and as she spent but little of it, and it was always accumulating, he could look forward to being well off some day. Therefore he was not to be blamed for humouring her by remaining. For miser and

eccentric though she was, there is little doubt she had a good deal of affection for him in her way.

As soon as I left him I took a cab and drove to the house of Miss Barbara Heywood. I found her to be a very attractive-looking young woman in appearance, but rather loud. I obtained an interview with her by sending up my card with simply my name on it. Without any preliminary or anything to lead up to it, I said bluntly—

‘Miss Heywood, I am connected with the detective department, and I want to know what you have done with the bank notes given to you by Charles Delanney.’

Beyond my own suspicions and the inferences I had drawn, I had no grounds for this demand. But it was a random shot, and my good luck served me. I saw her go scarlet, then white, and with a burst of indignation she exclaimed—

‘Why, what is wrong with the notes? Has he stolen them?’

‘Yes,’ I answered.

She became greatly agitated, and told me that he had given her four hundred and fifty pounds in new Bank of England notes, telling her to keep them, and that he intended to marry her shortly. These notes she at once returned to me intact, and, of course, I had no alternative but to arrest Charles Delanney, which, I am free to confess, I did with much reluctance, for I really felt he was to be pitied. With the exception of four or five pounds, he restored the balance of the money, and he confessed that he had taken the notes from his aunt’s reticule as she slept in the ’bus; and he told me more than this. He said that, in the attic of her house, beneath the flooring,

Miss Davies kept her money, and that he had been in the habit of helping himself to it for a considerable time.

It is in her favour that she refused to prosecute her foster son, and so he was released. I tried to persuade her to give him a sum sufficient to go abroad and keep him until he could get employment. But she resolutely refused to do this, and so I lost sight of them for two or three years, when I happened to notice in the law reports that Miss Davies being dead, and having died intestate, Delanney was a claimant for her estate. Being her nearest relative, he succeeded in establishing his claim, and as I felt interested in him I tried to follow his after career, which was sad enough. He married Barbara Heywood, and the two ran a riotous course, squandering the money with fearful prodigality, until one night three years later, while in a state of intoxication, he was run over by a cab in the Strand and killed. This was the pitiable sequel to Miss Davies' miserly habits. Her money was a curse to herself as well as to this unfortunate young man. Some of the problems of human life admit of no solution, and the miser's greed is surely one of them.

THE STORY OF A LITTLE CHILD.

ONE beautiful autumn afternoon, when even gloomy Glasgow looked bright and cheerful under the influence of the brilliant colours that flamed in the western sky as the sun dipped on the horizon, I was coming out of the Courthouse, facing Glasgow Green, where I had been engaged on some important business, when my ears were assailed with the pitiful sobbing and wailing of a child. Looking in the direction from whence the sounds proceeded, I observed an ill-favoured looking man of powerful build coming along in company with a woman. The man was carrying on his back a little boy of about eight or nine years of age, who was sobbing bitterly. The man and woman were obviously of the *genus* tramp. He was a big burly fellow, with a hard cruel face, on which was written the record of long years of want, wickedness, and dissipation. He had a low brow, over which a mass of tangled, rusty red hair struggled from beneath his ragged cap, which was too small for his bullet-like head. He was dressed in a very ancient pair of mole-skin trousers, a waistcoat that was all shreds and patches, and a tattered corduroy jacket of an indefinable hue. Round his neck was twisted a faded red handkerchief, and it was difficult to say whether he had on a shirt or not. The woman was no more pre-

possessing than the man. She was a draggle-tailed, whisky-sodden looking drab, dressed in a cotton gown, which, from the limp way it clung to her limbs, suggested that there was no other clothing underneath. Her shoulders were enveloped in an old shawl, while the shape, colour, and style of her bonnet would defy description. She carried a bundle on her shoulders, and slouched along with the swinging stride begotten of long years of tramping about the country. They were strangers to me, and I was sure they did not belong to the town, and for that reason I took particular notice of them, fixing their faces on my memory. I also noted that the child which the man was carrying was a pretty little fellow, with light curly hair; his prettiness was apparent in spite of smudges of dirt and grime. He was crying bitterly, and every now and then the man half turned his head and growled out a menace to the little chap.

‘That child,’ thought I to myself, ‘is never the offspring of those human animals, and I wonder what they are doing with him, and where they are taking him to.’

It was clear that the child was in distress, and my impulse was to follow these people and learn something about them. At that moment, however, one of the Chief Magistrates of the city, who had been in the Court House, came down the steps and accosted me, engaging me in conversation on some important matters for some ten minutes or so, and when I got clear of him, and my thoughts reverted once more to the tramps, they had, of course, disappeared from my ken. I should most certainly have gone after them, but I was due at the Central Station, having an important engagement to keep with the Chief Superintendent.

But, from force of habit, I took out my note-book and made some rough notes of the man and woman's description, as well as that of the child, thinking these notes might be useful at a future time. This done, I dismissed the tramps from my mind, and went about my business.

I was engaged until nine o'clock, and was then about to proceed home to get some much-needed refreshment, when a constable, standing at the door of the station, accosted me, and said—

‘We’ve just got news that there has been a child stolen.’

Instantly all my faculties were aroused, and I recalled to my mind the tramps I had seen that afternoon.

‘Whose child is it?’ I asked.

‘He’s the son of some people living up in Woodside Terrace, by the name of Lakie. The father’s a book-keeper in Stevenson’s shipping office.’

‘Have you a description of the lad?’ I asked.

‘Yes.’

The constable here read me a full description of the stolen boy, and it fully answered that of the child I had seen with the tramps. He also informed me that a description had been sent to all the stations in the town.

‘How do you know he has been stolen?’ I queried.

‘Well, it appears that the little chap had been sent a message to a neighbour’s, and a strange woman was seen to be talking to him, and a little later she was observed leading him towards a sweetie shop; after that all trace of him has been lost.’

‘Not quite,’ I answered, and then I related how, by an extraordinary chance, I had happened to see the

man and woman with the child making their way to the South Side.

This clue, it was thought, might prove valuable, and late as the hour was some attempt was made to follow it up, but unfortunately no further trace of the man and woman could be got that night. It was not considered, however, that there would be much difficulty in arresting the tramps, and as I was full of sympathy for the distressed parents, I called upon them after I had snatched a hasty meal, wishing to calm their fears as far as possible, and to assure them that the child would soon be recovered.

I found Mrs. Lakie, who was a young woman, almost beside herself with grief, and the father, I was informed, was no less affected, but he was still out hunting about the town. The lad, Robert, who had been carried off, was, so I was told by some neighbours, a fine little fellow. There were only two children in the family, the other being a girl.

I did all I could to calm the poor mother, and I assured her that, within twenty-four hours, her boy would be restored to her, and I did not anticipate he would be much the worse for his adventure. When I left her she was in a better frame of mind, and I felt glad I had gone to her. In telling her that the child would be restored within twenty-four hours I simply expressed my honest conviction, for I did not think it at all likely that the man and woman could get far away without being arrested, and I knew that they would not go to the risk and trouble to carry off a child with a view to doing him an injury; and as for the clothes he was wearing, the mother informed me that he had on a well-worn suit of velveteen which originally had only cost eighteen shillings, so that I felt

confident the wretches had not taken the child for his clothes. Their object, no doubt, was to make a beggar of him. When the next day passed, and the next after that had come without bringing any tidings of the lost child, I began to take a more serious view of the case. Moreover, I felt somehow as if my reputation was at stake, for I had spoken confidently to the mother that the child would be restored within twenty-four hours. Up to this time I had not taken any active part in trying to trace the missing child, as I quite thought that the police would speedily find him. But beyond ascertaining that the man, woman, and child had passed the night in a common lodging-house on the South Side, and had left early in the morning, they had not succeeded in getting any information. It was, therefore, obvious that the tramps were more cunning and artful than their class generally. Under the circumstances, I resolved to do my utmost to restore the little fellow to the arms of his broken-hearted parents, and, taking the trail up, I endeavoured to follow it beyond the common lodging-house where the tramps had passed the night; but, strangely enough, there it ended, and do what I would I could not get any information as to their movements after they left the lodging-house. They had gone away about five o'clock in the morning, but what route they had taken it was impossible to find out. The lodging-house-keeper vowed that they were utter strangers to him, and were exceedingly reticent, letting no word drop as to where they had come from or whither they were going. I spent many days over the case, but neither my endeavours nor a reward of ten pounds offered by the distracted parents were productive of any results. As other and more pressing duties claimed my atten-

tion in the meantime, I had to abandon the case, but I was very far from satisfied. Failure always annoyed me. I could not bear to think that knavery and cunning were capable of outwitting the trained forces of the law. As a rule, the law triumphs in the end, but even a temporary check to a conscientious man is not pleasant.

Although I had, so far, been unsuccessful in this particular instance, I was unwilling to believe that the failure was anything but temporary. However, a whole year and a half passed without bringing any tidings of the lost child. During that period I frequently saw the parents, for their sorrow was so great that I did all I could to encourage them to hope that, sooner or later, the boy would be restored to them. Their own impression was that the little fellow had been killed, but I could by no means think so, because there was an absence of all motive for such a crime. Logic wouldn't support the theory of the boy's murder. It was hardly likely that a man and woman would imperil their necks for the sake of the few shillings' worth of clothes the child had on when he was stolen. I felt perfectly convinced he had been taken away for a far different motive, and that motive, in my opinion, was to make a professional beggar of him. I therefore was very sanguine that ultimately I should succeed in tracing him. This view I could not get the parents to share; they abandoned all hope of seeing him again, and mourned him as one dead.

The Glasgow Fair time had arrived, and on one of the days I happened to be wandering amongst the booths, when a face came before me that I thought I had seen before. Now I have always had an exceedingly good memory for faces. With me to once see a

face is to never absolutely forget it. This face that attracted my attention was that of a man. He was a big burly fellow, and was in possession of a Punch and Judy show. I watched him for some time trying to think where I had seen him. Then suddenly it flashed across my mind that he was the man I had seen passing the Court House, carrying the child, a year and a half ago. As this occurred to me, a woman joined him. She was the drum beater and pipe player, while he worked the puppets. I recognised her immediately. She was the woman who was with him on that day when the child was stolen, and though she looked a little more dissipated, she had not altered much, but he had considerably changed his appearance by growing a beard, which he had not when I first saw him.

I was naturally elated at having thus discovered the people I had so long been anxious to see. My first step was to ascertain the name of the fellow. This was easy, as he had to get a permit to stand on the ground he occupied. I found that the name he had given was Daniel Borthwick. Going back to the Fair I went up to my man, who had just finished one of his exhibitions, and he and his wife were counting the pence they had taken.

‘Good day to you, Mr. Daniel Borthwick,’ I said.

He seemed rather surprised at hearing his name uttered like this, and looking up he answered in a surly tone—

‘Good day. You seem to have my name pretty pat.’

‘Yes,’ said I, ‘have I not? The fact is, I have been thinking about you for the last eighteen months.’

The fellow’s face changed colour a little with the sudden instinct of fear, and with a menacing frown on his low brow he said gruffly—

‘What have you been thinking of me for? I’ve never done you any wrong, have I?’

‘Well, in a sense you’ve done *me* a wrong. But there are others to whom you have done infinitely greater wrong. Now, Mr. Daniel Borthwick, what has become of the child, Robert Lakie?’

The fellow turned deadly pale, and sprang off the box on which he had been sitting as if some mechanism had shot him off.

‘What do you mean?’ he demanded with an oath.

‘My meaning is plain enough, isn’t it?’ I said, as I confronted him, and at the same time made a sign to two of my men who were in waiting; ‘or if it is not I will endeavour to make it still plainer. You and that woman stole a child by the name of Robert Lakie from his parents eighteen months ago. What have you done with him?’

‘You lie,’ hissed the woman fiercely.

‘No, I don’t,’ I said. ‘Anyway, I’ll take the chance of that.’ So saying, I seized the man so suddenly, and he was so taken off his guard, that I was enabled to handcuff him without much difficulty. My men then took the woman into custody, and we at once conveyed our prisoners to the Central, where I charged them with having kidnapped the boy.

They protested their innocence, with constant appeals to their Maker to witness that they spoke the truth. Of course these protests did not affect us, and it devolved on me now to get proof against them. I saw clearly enough that there might be some difficulty in this, although I hoped to overcome it. My first step was to bring up the keeper of the lodging-house at which they slept on the night they stole the child, and both this man and his wife declared positively that

they were the people who came to the house with the child. Borthwick and his wife were evidently taken aback by this recognition, but still they continued to vow that they were innocent. The following morning, however, on my going to the Central, I was informed that the woman had made an urgent request to see me. I at once went to her cell, when she exclaimed, as she pretended to squeeze out some tears—

‘Look here, mister, can you make it light for me and my man if I put you on the track of the child?’

I could scarcely suppress a smile of satisfaction as I heard this, for it was tantamount to a confession of guilt.

‘I can promise you nothing,’ I said; ‘but if you are the means of restoring the child to his parents it will tell in your favour, no doubt.’

She seemed somewhat disappointed, and walked up and down in gloomy meditation for some minutes. I did not say anything, but waited patiently, and at last, as if urged by some sudden impulse, she turned, faced me, and exclaimed—

‘Well, the brat is with Fanqué’s Circus.’

‘And where is Fanqué’s Circus now?’ I asked.

‘The last I heard of it it was at Leeds.’

It did not take me long to discover Fanqué’s Circus, for it was well known as a travelling show, and I learned that at that moment it was in Wolverhampton. Thither I made my way, and, with some difficulty, found that little Robert Lakie was performing in the company under the name of ‘Achille Louis—The Child Wonder.’ He had been trained as a rider, and had displayed such an aptitude for it that his performance was really marvellous.

Of course, I immediately communicated with his

parents, for it was necessary to place his identity beyond doubt. They came at once, and recognised their child immediately, as he did them. The proprietor of the circus, a Frenchman by the name of Fanqué, had got the child from the Borthwicks, believing, as he asserted, that he was their child, and the little fellow had been bound to the Circus proprietor for seven years on condition that he paid thirty pounds a year to the supposed parents. The lad had been a whole year in France, where he had been trained to ride, and also taught to speak French. He complained that he had been ill used at first, but at that time was very happy, and said that he would not leave the Circus. Tears, protestations, threats on the part of his father and mother, were alike unavailing, and he vowed, if he took him home, he would run away. His father, however, insisted on taking him, but, true to his word, the lad made off a week later, and went back to the Circus. And though it almost broke his mother's heart, she felt with her husband that, for a time at least, it would be better to let the lad follow his own inclinations.

As ample proof was now forthcoming that the Borthwicks had kidnapped the child, I felt sure of getting them convicted, nor was I wrong, for they were each sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.

As a sequel to this little story I may mention that the hopes of Mr. and Mrs. Lakie, that their boy would ultimately tire of the Circus life and return to them, were never realised. Riding had developed into a passion with him, and he became known throughout the country as one of the most fearless and daring performers in the ring. But, after ten years of this

exciting life, his career suddenly closed. He fell one night from a barebacked horse that was going at full gallop round the ring. In falling, the horse struck him with its hoof on the head, and he was carried out insensible, suffering from bad concussion of the brain. The accident happened in Liverpool, and as soon after as possible he was conveyed to the house of his parents in Glasgow, where he was tenderly nursed and tended by his mother. He never recovered, however; the injury had been too severe, and, though he lingered for two years, softening of the brain set in and killed him.

A LEAP FOR LIBERTY.

ONE of the most remarkable criminals I ever had to deal with was a man named Jacob Perrin, but who had as many *aliases* as there are letters in Constantinople. He was remarkable in many respects, for he was handsome, well formed, well educated, clever, an accomplished linguist—speaking seven or eight languages—and particularly fond of gaiety, pleasure, and liberty. But what perhaps was still more remarkable was his deep ingrained and ineradicable criminal propensities. It is easy to understand how a man who is born of criminal parents, who is nurtured in a criminal atmosphere, who imbibes criminal ideas with his maternal sustenance, should grow up a hardened scoundrel, at war with society, opposed to all the rules of social well-being, and the laws which regulate communities of honest men and women. But when a man is the offspring of respectable people, when he is carefully trained in his youth, and schooled by precept and example, and yet drifts into criminal ways, and deliberately chooses them in preference to those of uprightness and virtue, he presents us with a problem of human nature which it is hopeless to try and solve. The subject of this narrative was such a problem. He might have carved out a position of honour for himself, and died respected and beloved. His mental powers

were such, and his ability for acquiring knowledge so great, that there are few offices that ambitious men strive for that he might not have fulfilled. But from his earliest youth his propensity for wrongdoing displayed itself, and at the age of fifteen he was expelled from a school for robbing some of his schoolmates of small sums of money. His parents were fairly well off, his father holding a position of confidence and trust as a foreign correspondent in a large mercantile firm that had connections in all parts of the world. After his expulsion the lad was placed in an important public school, where he remained until he was twenty, and distinguished himself no less by his astounding quickness in learning than by his reckless and dissipated conduct out of school. He affected billiard-saloons, music-halls, public-house bars, and other similar places of resort, where the youthful mind can scarcely avoid becoming tainted, and where the moral sense is apt to be warped and blunted. Jacob Perrin was undoubtedly a source of deep anxiety to his parents, and when his schooling was finished his father obtained him an appointment with the firm with which he himself was connected, and Jacob was sent by the firm to Lisbon. He spent twelve months there, but having, while in a state of intoxication, grossly insulted a high public dignitary, he was removed and sent to Malaga, in Spain, where his employers had another branch house. Before he had been there six months, however, he robbed his employers of a considerable sum of money. They condoned the offence out of respect for his father, but he was dismissed, and betook himself to Paris, where he obtained employment by means of a forged character as clerk in a commission agent's office. But here he

forged a bill of exchange, and, being tried and convicted, he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. On his release he returned to London, and associating himself with a man who had been convicted of various offences, they obtained a quantity of goods under false pretences from different tradespeople. And for this offence he was also convicted, and got another two years' imprisonment. On once more regaining his liberty, he made the acquaintance of a highly respectable young lady, who was possessed of about a thousand pounds, and, managing to deceive her as to his character and career, he induced her to marry him, and obtained the money, with which he took a large house in a fashionable neighbourhood in London, where he concocted a swindle of a gigantic character. He floated a company for working a gold mine, said to be situated in Mexico, but whose existence was solely in the imagination of Mr. Jacob Perrin. From this nefarious transaction he succeeded in obtaining nearly fifty thousand pounds, and then, deserting his wife, he fled. His co-directors were indicted for fraud, and though some of them were innocent of any intention to defraud the shareholders, they were all sentenced to various terms of imprisonment.

Perrin succeeded in avoiding capture for a considerable time, during which, it is believed, he remained in Spain indulging in the most riotous living, and spending the money he had stolen with idiotic recklessness. At length, getting hard up, he ventured to return to London under the style of Signor Alva Gonzales, and he installed himself in Kensington as 'a Teacher of Languages,' which was only a blind, however, for new exploits, one of which was obtaining from a widow lady whose acquaintance he made nearly

ten thousand pounds for investment in a Spanish Land Mortgage Company, from which she was to get twelve to fifteen per cent. It is needless to say he appropriated the money to his own use; but the widow, growing suspicious, put her business into the hands of some lawyers, who brought 'Signor Alva Gonzales' to book, and he was put on trial for the fraud. It was then discovered that he was the long-wanted Jacob Perrin, and a new indictment was framed against him. On account of a technical weakness in the law he escaped punishment for his fraud on the poor widow; but, being tried for the part he played in connection with the bogus company, he was convicted and got seven years' penal servitude. In five years' time he was released on sufferance, and his active mind at once began to devise new schemes for enjoying himself at the expense of his fellows. Even at this time, when he had so many black records against him, and he was branded deep with the brand of the felon, he might have gained a good living in honest paths had he been so disposed. But honesty was not in him, and he could no more keep his hands from picking and stealing and his brain from concocting schemes of roguery than water can help running down hill. It was soon after this period of his career that he came under my notice, and I received instructions to keep my eye on him. Looking upon the man as a criminal curiosity, I studied him, and learned his history as I have given it to the reader. With his plausibility, his address, and his outward semblance of a gentleman, he experienced little difficulty in gaining access to respectable society, and having a weakness for the West End of London he took a house under the very shadow of the historic Holland House, in Kensington,

and his windows commanded a view of the magnificent Holland Gardens, which have so often witnessed the revels of wit and beauty, and where Royalty itself has frequently disported in the umbrageous coolness of the grand old oaks. Here, in this classic atmosphere of refinement and gentility, Jacob Perrin, swindler, forger, and ex-convict, established himself as *Monsieur le Comte D'Arnay*, a French refugee. His knowledge of French being perfect, he had no difficulty in passing himself off as a Frenchman.

Of course he soon made acquaintances, amongst them being a widow lady with a small fortune, and a retired military officer, Colonel —, formerly of the — Regiment, with which he had seen much active service. This gentleman seems to have become quite fascinated with *Monsieur le Comte D'Arnay*, and, quite deceived by his specious stories of his large estates and vineyards in France, he lent him five thousand pounds, with which the pseudo Count stocked his wine cellar, purchased a carriage and a pair of horses, and surrounded himself with other luxuries. He then induced the widow lady to marry him. And had he chosen to live quietly and have treated the lady with some regard and kindness, he might have gone on a considerable time in revelling in luxury, the proceeds of his wits. But, having got as much money from her as he could, he behaved cruelly, and she left him, taking a separate establishment of her own. He at once commenced to persecute her, and it was at this precise stage my services were enlisted; and speedily discovering who he was I had him up for bigamy, which, being clearly proved against him, he was sentenced to two years' hard labour; and on the expiration of that sentence, he was immediately re-arrested,

and tried on a charge of fraud in connection with the money he had obtained from Colonel ——. Unfortunately the charge could not be sustained, as the Colonel had lent the money without any definite conditions. As my gentleman escaped on that count, the officer filed a petition in bankruptcy against him, and succeeded in getting back a trifle of his money, as, on his conviction for bigamy, Perrin had warehoused most of his furniture and effects, and though none of these had been paid for they were sold for the benefit of the general creditors; and as the estate included something like a thousand pounds' worth of wine, and another thousand pounds' worth of plate, his dupes got some trifle in the pound for their gullibility.

As soon as the adventurer was released he went abroad, the country of his choice this time being Italy. I saw him just before he started, and was astonished to note how well he kept his youthful appearance and good looks, while not a trace of the prison atmosphere or prison manners was to be detected in him. Well dressed, he would have passed anywhere for a man of quality and refinement. Of course, this made him all the more dangerous, for his natural polish and extreme plausibility rendered it easier for him to prey upon society.

As soon as it was known that he had taken himself to the sunny land of Italy, the authorities of that country were warned of his presence amongst them, and presumably they must have rendered his position somewhat irksome, for he suddenly disappeared, and for a time all trace of him was lost. When next heard of, he had turned up in New York, where he soon fascinated a lady possessed of money, and induced her

to marry him. He represented himself as Achilles Blouet, the son of a wealthy merchant established in Rouen. His new matrimonial fetters, however, were soon severed, for he was not as successful in obtaining the lady's money as he hoped to be, and so abandoned her.

As London seemed to have an irresistible fascination for him, he again turned up in the British Metropolis, where he assumed the rôle of a company promoter, taking the name of William Vere Beaumont. He does not seem to have been particularly successful in this line, for he tried a new field of operations, and his versatile ingenuity was displayed by his starting a 'working man's building society.' But now he was 'Mr. Walter Rivington Selhurst.' (If he had only made the surname Sellus it would not have been inappropriate.) He secured offices in the city, and getting hold of a gentleman with money, who easily fell a victim to his remarkable gullible powers, a magnificently attractive scheme was launched, whereby, according to the prospectus and advertisements, every working man was to become the owner of a grand house by the payment of very trifling instalments. It was necessary, however, that the would-be house-owner should become a ten pound shareholder in the society. Each shareholder was promised his money back by ballot within ten years, with a bonus of twenty pounds. That is, every subscriber of ten pounds was to get back his ten pounds, and twenty added to it, within ten years. The gullibility of human nature is so extraordinary where a promise of large profits is held out, that even this impossible and Quixotic scheme attracted victims as a honey pot attracts flies. For a few months our

enterprising swindler did a roaring business, and the money rolled in. The gentleman, however, who had advanced the capital to start with began to get suspicious, and his suspicions communicated themselves to the so-called shareholders, and at once a clamour arose, which so disconcerted Mr. Walter Rivington Selhurst, that he secured all the loose cash and betook himself to fresh woods and pastures new.

A very little investigation of the scheme served to prove that it was a gigantic swindle, and if the hundreds of working men who had been induced to part with their ten pounds could only have got hold of Mr. W. R. Selhurst at that moment it would not have been long before a microscope might have been necessary to discover his pieces. But the gentleman with the many names was a slippery customer, and it almost seemed as if he was as capable of rendering himself invisible as were the legendary possessors of fern seed in the olden times. As soon as possible a warrant was issued for his arrest, and it was placed in my hands for execution, but in spite of the telegraph, which was set in motion all over the kingdom, I could hear nothing of my man for some time, and, knowing what I did of him, I was quite of opinion that he had gone abroad. I therefore caused his description to be circulated over all Europe, but without any result. I did not despair of his ultimate capture, but I was afraid that, before he was secured, he might ruin numberless other weak people, and I was anxious to prevent that if possible.

At length, one afternoon a telegram was received at Scotland Yard from the Manchester police, saying that the day previous a man had been arrested on suspicion of a hotel robbery, but it was soon discovered

that a mistake had been made, and the man arrested was not the man who had committed the robbery. A cute officer, however, fancied, from some cause or other, that the man detained, and whose name was supposed to be George Neville, was none other than the much-wanted Jacob Perrin. But having no charge against him, unless they could prove his identity, they could not legally detain him, as he had already been twenty-four hours in custody. It was, therefore, requested that some one who knew Perrin well should go down to Manchester immediately to see if he could identify him. This duty necessarily fell upon me, as I had been charged with the execution of the warrant for his arrest, and I was in time to get the last train down to Manchester. On arrival I found that the man had been set at liberty, as he could not legally be kept in custody, but an officer had been told off to specially watch him, and I was informed that the suspected man was staying at the — Hotel. I lost no time in going there. When I arrived it was eleven o'clock, and I was told that Neville, as he said his name was, had retired for the night. By a little stratagem I got access to his bed-room, and though he had greatly altered his personal appearance by shaving and dyeing his hair, I felt sure that he was Perrin, although he strenuously denied that he was. And now arose a difficulty. Although I had no doubt in my mind that he was the man, I could not at that moment swear that he was. To have re-arrested him on suspicion in Manchester would have required a local magistrate's warrant in addition to the one I held, for the police having made one mistake would not run the risk of another. At that hour a warrant could not legally be obtained, and so I resolved to

take all responsibility and risk on my own shoulders, and convey the fellow to London at once, where I could detain him on the strength of my warrant until I got evidence to prove that he was Perrin. The trains had, of course, ceased running, but securing the services of two constables I charged them not to let the suspected man out of their sight. This did not imply that they could detain him in his room or even in the hotel, and as a matter of fact he was free to go whither he liked. But I got over this difficulty by affecting to believe that I was mistaken; and, profuse in my apologies for the trouble I had given him, I withdrew. But I placed one policeman at his door and another under his window, and then, jumping into a cab, I drove to the railway station, where I secured an interview with the station-master, and representing to him how necessary it was for me to have the suspected man in London in the morning, I begged him to devise some means for my taking him up to London at once. After considerable hesitation he said he would place an engine and tender at my disposal. A locomotive had just arrived with a goods train, and was still in the engine shed with steam up. This matter arranged, I hurried back to the hotel, but had to break open the bed-room door before I could get another interview with the suspect. This act of breaking open the door was illegal, but I was resolved to risk everything, for I felt sure the man was Perrin. I need scarcely say he affected to be highly indignant, and threatened me with all sorts of pains and penalties. As he refused to go at first, I told him I should handcuff him and take him by force. He thereupon consented to go. 'But remember,' he added, 'you shall pay dearly for this outrage upon and insult to a

free subject.' I was not intimidated, but placing him in a cab, and accompanied by two policemen, I conveyed him to the station.

The locomotive was waiting with her steam up, and a half empty tender attached. Some forms had been placed in the tender, and I was informed that a high rate of speed could be maintained, as a telegram had been sent all along the line that we were coming. All being ready we started out of the station. I sat next and close to my man, and apart from the engine driver and stoker, there was an inspector of the line on the engine. I did not handcuff the prisoner, as he protested so strongly against it, and vowed that he would offer no resistance. Moreover, I thought that, if he should show fight in any way, we could soon overcome him and put him in irons. I confess that this was not only stupid on my part, but an error that was all but unpardonable.

Within a quarter of an hour of leaving the station we were tearing along at the rate of fifty miles an hour. The sensations engendered were as curious as the experience was novel. The engine swayed, rocked, and oscillated in such a violent manner that I expected every moment it would have overturned. It was almost impossible to keep in one's seat without holding on to the side of the tender. The night was not dark, but the sky was filled with masses of broken, sombre clouds that occasionally, as they drifted along, allowed a three-quarter old moon to shine forth for a few moments, and then strange, weird shadows were called into being over the landscape, and as they swept along we seemed like some unearthly monster pursuing them. As we tore through the stations the noise was terrific, and the absence of lights and people

only added to the sombreness and gloom, and seemed to suggest to the imaginative mind that, save ourselves, all things slept the sleep of death, and eternal night had closed over the world.

My prisoner was very silent. I spoke to him once or twice, but he only answered in monosyllables, and at last, setting himself down in one corner with his feet braced against a heavy block of iron, which the engine driver placed on the floor of the tender to enable us to keep our seats better by pressing our feet against it, he seemed to fall into a sound sleep. I was thrown off my guard, and yielded partially to a sense of drowsiness that stole upon me.

Suddenly something seemed to swoop past me. I heard a rush and a cry, and then I was conscious that my man was gone. He had leapt from the engine, and was lost in the darkness.

‘Well, he’s a dead man anyway,’ remarked the engine driver when he had recovered from his surprise.

‘Ay, there’s no doubt about that,’ added the stoker with an emphasis that made it clear he perfectly agreed with his mate.

‘Yes,’ put in the inspector slowly, ‘we shall find him literally smashed to pieces.’

For myself I could not undertake to say what my thoughts were; but I do know that, if ever I rated myself an ass in all my life, I did it then.

It took a considerable time to bring the engine to a standstill, during which I could scarcely restrain my impatience. As soon as we had stopped I descended with the inspector, and we hurried back along the line, the engine following us slowly. At about the spot where we supposed the prisoner had

taken his daring leap was a wood on each side of the railway, and it was only separated from the line by a ditch. Here we searched thoroughly, but not a sign could we see. We continued the search for two hours, and then the engine-driver said he must go on as a heavy up luggage train was nearly due. I decided to remain behind, and being informed by the driver that there was a village half a mile or so away, I hurried to it, and after some trouble succeeded in finding a cottage where a rural constable lived. I demanded his assistance, which he readily rendered, and he took me to the village inn, where we got a horse and trap. We then drove to the railway, and leaving the conveyance in charge of a stable-boy who had come with us, we searched the wood and the ditches thoroughly, and were searching when daylight came. But the man was nowhere to be found, and it was evident that his desperate leap for liberty had been so far successful, and he had escaped.

I lost no time in proceeding to the nearest town, where I had an interview with the Chief Superintendent of Police, and we soon had a squad of men out scouring the country, while the telegraph spread the news far and wide; for now I had not the shadow of a doubt that the man who had made this surprising leap for his freedom was the veritable Jacob Perrin, the most notorious criminal of the age. A very careful examination of the spot where he was supposed to have fallen revealed the fact that, by a strange chance, he had selected a most favourable place for his leap, for the ground was soft with moss and the ditch of water would break the concussion of his fall. Still, experts maintained that, having regard to the speed of the engine, he could not have escaped unhurt. For myself

I would not believe he had gone far, even supposing he had not been injured, for the hue and cry had spread so rapidly that he must have been detected. So I lingered about the spot hoping that I might, by some chance, pick up his trail.

About two hundred yards away from where he had fallen was a farm-house, and it suddenly occurred to me to make inquiries there, and then, to my agreeable surprise, I found my man there, and what is more he was terribly injured. He had broken an arm and some ribs, had dislocated his ankle, and had torn a strip of flesh several inches long clean from the bone of his left leg. Besides, he was bruised and lacerated, more or less, all over his body. In this pitiable plight he had crawled to the farm, and told the people that he was travelling in a special excursion train from Manchester to London, when he had quarrelled with some men in the carriage, and they had thrown him out of the window. This plausible story had secured him shelter and attention. As he was suffering severely, and seeing that the game was up, he confessed that he was Jacob Perrin. I therefore procured him the assistance of a police surgeon from the next town, and having had the injuries attended to, he was removed in a carriage to the station, and thence conveyed to London, where he was placed in the hospital. It was a long time before he could be brought to trial, and then the once handsome, reckless, and unprincipled adventurer was a mere wreck. His good looks had left him, and he was a pale, emaciated, haggard old man. The black record against him told, of course, when sentence was being passed, and he got twenty years' penal servitude. To one at his age, and with his constitution broken as it was, that was practically

a lifer—literally so, in fact, to him, for the miserable failure of his bold leap to secure him his liberty so preyed upon his mind that a year later, while at Dartmoor, he made another and still more desperate leap, for he leaped into eternity. One morning, while the prisoners were being assembled for church service, he rushed from the ranks, and before he could be stopped had thrown himself over a balustrade into a paved court below, where he was found a mangled, inert mass. Ten minutes after he was picked up he had breathed his last. Thus closed the career of one who deliberately chose to pervert the high gifts God had given him, and to live his life by preying upon the weakness of his fellow men. By steady perseverance he might have amassed a fortune, and have lived to a green old age, dying at last with praises ringing in his ears, whereas all the large sums he had got by dishonest means had been squandered in the most reckless fashion, and during the time he was not in prison he was living like a hunted animal. And the end of it all—a suicide's death in a convict prison! Truly it was pitiable; and his life and death certainly serve to point a moral and adorn a tale. Surely a crust honestly earned is sweeter far than the loaf that is procured by roguery!

THE HELVELLYN TRAGEDY.

AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY.

THOSE who have not yet visited the magnificent Lake Country of England have yet a treat in store. Within a small and compact area there are to be found all the elements that go to make up grand scenery—namely, mountains, lakes, rivers, and valleys. There is soft and unique picturesqueness; there are desolation and solitude; there are wonderful bits of Dantesque weirdness; and there are dales so enchanting in their sweetness and simplicity that one could wish for nothing better than, when his time came, to die in them, for there the name of Nature is Peace. Again, there are spots where human foot rarely treads, and the eagle builds her nest unmolested in the higher pinnacles of the frowning crags. There are tarns* that are veritable jewels set in a magnificent mosaic of colours. In fact, everywhere in this blest region the richness of Nature's colours begets the wonder of all who behold them. A very slight acquaintance

* It may be interesting to state that, according to De Quincey, *Tarn* comes from the Danish word *Taaren*, which means a trickling of tears—that is, a deposit of water from the weeping of rain down the smooth faces of the rock.

with this beautiful part of our beautiful islands enables one to understand the seductive attractions that have lured so many authors, poets, painters, and scholars to the enchanted spot. Then, again, the dalesmen seem to be a distinct race. They are simple, honest, courageous, and contented. If the fret and roar of the passionate world breaks upon their ears they are not affected by it, and the peaceful flow of their lives is not often disturbed by exciting events. Sometimes, however, though happily rarely, a tragedy casts a gloom over their dreamy valleys, as in the case of the story of the Greens, so beautifully and pathetically told by De Quincey in his 'Early Memorials of Grasmere.' The Greens, husband and wife, were humble but most worthy and highly respected peasants, with a numerous family of small children. They resided in one of the most impressive solitudes in all Lakeland, namely, the little valley of Easedale, the only entrance to which is from Grasmere. De Quincey speaks of the 'excessive loveliness' of this sweet spot, and here, in a small cottage farm, dwelt the Greens. One day in the winter, about the beginning of the present century, the father and mother set out to cross the mountains in order that they might attend a sale, leaving their eldest daughter, a child under ten years, to look after the children, the house, and the cow. Heavy snow had been falling, and lay heavy on the mountains. When the sale was over, the worthy couple started to return to their home, and against the advice of their neighbours they took the mountain as saving a detour of some miles, for they were anxious to be with their children before nightfall, and the hour was already late. But they were destined never to see their little ones again. A snow-

storm burst over the land, and not only slew the poor bewildered man and woman on the mountains, but snowed up their children in their cottage at the head of lonely Easedale. For three long awful days and nights did the little maiden, aged ten, minister to the wants of her tiny brothers and sisters, under circumstances that would have appalled many an older person. And her story, as told by herself in her own childish and impressive language, of these three days and nights, is the story of a heroine, who was well worthy of being immortalised as De Quincey has immortalised her. More than a week passed before the bodies of the mother and father were found. In the blinding snow and the darkness of the night they had wandered far out of their course and far up the mountain. The poor woman, wrapped in her husband's great coat, was lying on the snow near the edge of a precipice, and the husband was lying at the bottom of the precipice. It is supposed that the wife had become exhausted, and the husband had wrapped her in his coat and set off to try and obtain succour. But all unconsciously they were on the edge of a precipice, over which he plunged the first few steps he took, and his wife, possibly unaware that her partner had perished, lay down in the snow and was frozen to death. It is satisfactory to know that their helpless orphans were well provided for by a public subscription, to which the Royal Family themselves liberally subscribed.

The tragedy I have to record is of very much later date than this, and is associated with the stern and rugged mountain known as Helvellyn, around which both Wordsworth and Sir Walter Scott have cast a halo of romance. Helvellyn, however, has all the

elements of romance about it. Towering up to a height of more than three thousand feet, it is singularly rugged and precipitous, and fraught with terrible danger to him who attempts to scale its steeps when snow or mist circle round its head. It is subject at all times to storms, and often, when Nature is smiling in the valley below, the winds are shrieking in mad fury around Helvellyn's crest. Patterdale is one of the starting points for ascending the mountain, and to the little inn, that then stood in the valley, a young man came towards the close of a day in summer. It had been a somewhat sombre day, and threatening masses of clouds had drifted over the hills, though no rain had fallen in the valleys. The young man was a pedestrian, and carried a knapsack on his back. He was hot, dusty, and tired, and thankful for the cos comfort of the inn, and showed, by the prodigious meal he made, how much he appreciated the juicy ham and eggs, the freshly-caught trout, the thick, luscious cream, the home-made bread, the heather honey, the delicious butter, and all the other things which one can enjoy to perfection in this wondrous Lakeland. His meal finished, he smoked his pipe and chatted pleasantly with the host, telling him that he was a schoolmaster who had come to spend his holidays by a tramp though the Lake country, and that, on the morrow, he was going up Helvellyn.

The morrow dawned. It was by no means a favourable day for the ascent, as heavy clouds were hanging about and rain was threatening. The young man, however, was all impatience, and when the landlord suggested a guide to him he laughed at the idea. He said he had been up mountains in Wales and Scotland, and was used to climbing. And so, leaving his knap-

sack behind, and only taking some luncheon with him, he started off, saying he would be back before it was dark. The night fell, however, but he had not returned, and when ten o'clock struck the landlord of the inn became uneasy, and courageously set off with three or four other men to search for the missing traveller. It was an intensely dark night, and they could not make progress, even with the aid of their lanterns. When they had been gone about an hour and a half, the rain, which had been threatening all day, commenced to fall, and the mountain was wrapped in an impenetrable mist, and rendered further progress absolutely impossible.

The following morning, although rain was not actually falling, the clouds were so low that everything above two or three hundred feet was obscured. Nevertheless the landlord sent some of his men to spread the news of the missing man, and to call for volunteer bands of searchers. These were speedily forthcoming, for the dalesmen are ever ready to cheerfully render assistance on such occasions. In spite of the thick mists a considerable number of men went on to the mountain, but as it was impossible to see anything more than a few yards away their search was ineffectual, nor were they enabled to get to any great height. The next day the weather was even worse, for the rain poured down in torrents, and the clouds not only shrouded the mountains but filled the valleys.

Of course, the news had rapidly spread, and there was much excitement, and brave men still tried to carry on the search, though they could do but little. In the course of the day an old woman came in, and stated that on the morning the young man left the inn, she was coming down the valley on her way to

market, and she saw two men some little distance up on the mountain side. One was a young man, and she described him so accurately that there was no doubt he was the lost traveller. The other was an oldish man, and was dressed like a sailor. What particularly attracted her attention to them was that they seemed to be in altercation. She judged this more from their gestures than from anything she could hear. Presently they moved on, disappearing round a boulder of rock, and she continued her journey, thinking nothing more of the incident until she heard that a young man was missing. It is needless to say that this statement gave a new colouring to the affair, and raised in men's minds a suspicion of foul play. Nobody but the old woman had seen a man dressed like a sailor in any part of the district; but she was known to be highly respectable and intelligent, so that no one doubted her, and the excitement increased. The landlord then felt it to be his duty to open the knapsack in order that he might learn who the young man was, and his address. It was found from letters in the knapsack that his name was Alfred Wedmore, and that he came from Nottingham. No time, therefore, was lost in telegraphing to his friends, and within twenty-four hours his father and brother had arrived, and were, as may be well imagined, in great distress. The weather still remained atrocious. Threatening for some time, it had, in fact, completely broken up, and, as is often the case in these districts, winter seemed to have suddenly declared itself. Snow fell on the upper heights, while in the valley the rain poured down incessantly, and the cold was nipping. In spite of this men went out, but could get no trace of the missing tourist, nor could any-

thing be heard of the person described as resembling a sailor, and the conclusion arrived at was that they must have both perished on the mountain, and their bodies were possibly lying in some rocky cleft.

The father and brother were distracted, and the former telegraphed to Manchester to a dear old friend of mine, from whom I subsequently heard all the details of the story. He had proved himself singularly successful in tracing missing people. He seemed, in fact, to have some special and peculiar instinct for this kind of work, and his reputation having spread, Mr. Wedmore, sen., had heard of him, and so telegraphed for his assistance. As soon as possible my friend set off, but that was destined to be his death journey, for days and days of exposure to the rain in his zeal to solve the mystery surrounding the loss of young Wedmore laid the seeds of a fatal disease that carried him off six months later.

However, this is somewhat anticipating. The arrival of my friend gave a new impetus to the search parties, if that were needed. And they were stimulated to renewed energies by the relatives offering a reward of £50 for the recovery of the body, for it was no longer doubted that the young man had lost his life. Speculation was rife, as may naturally be supposed, as to who the stranger could be, who, on the testimony of the old woman, had been seen in company with Wedmore on the mountain. In such sparsely populated districts a stranger is very conspicuous, but all inquiries failed to bring forward any one who had seen a man having the appearance of a sailor. This strengthened the suspicion that the man, whoever he was, had joined Wedmore in the ascent, and the two had lost their

lives together. But what was strange was that, in spite of the publicity given to the mysterious affair, no information was forthcoming of any one else being missing. If the supposed sailor—and perhaps it was, after all, only some peculiarity of dress that suggested a sailor to the old woman—was a tourist, his friends must have had some idea that he was in the Lake country, and his continued absence would have led to inquiries being made. But this was not the case. And even if he had been a sailor travelling through the district, somebody would surely have been aware of the fact and have missed him, assuming that he had lost his life on Helvellyn.

Dwelling on these points my friend for the first time began to entertain suspicions of foul play. These suspicions, however, did not take shape until he had been searching for several days and felt himself baffled. Then he sought an interview with the old woman, who closely adhered to her statement, but she made an addition, for she said that the sailor man was carrying a stick and a bundle. She was emphatic in her assertion that the man had the appearance of a sailor. Closely questioned on this point, she said he wore a cap such as seafaring men usually wear, and what is known as a reefing jacket. He had dark whiskers all round his face, and a moustache that completely concealed his mouth. She was also of opinion that he was sunburnt, but she was not pronounced in this, for she had observed the man more in a general way than in detail. So far as she could speak on the point, he might have been fifty or over. She certainly did not think he was under fifty. The 'stick and the bundle' gave a new turn to the affair, and my friend inferred from that that he might be a tramp, and this tended

to increase the growing suspicion. Of course, it was quite feasible that the tramp might have been a sailor, *i.e.*, a sailor on tramp, but then the question arose, 'Where was the sailor going to? What was he doing in that district?' Now, it did not infrequently happen that sailors on tramp passed through the western part of the country, that is, coming down from Maryport, Workington, or Whitehaven, and *en route* to Barrow. But for one of these wayfarers and seafarers to strike inland as far as the foot of Helvellyn was to go entirely out of his latitude, for it was on the road to nowhere as far as the ordinary business of a sailor was concerned.

My friend viewed and reviewed the circumstances from every possible point, and the more he did so the more he inclined to the belief of foul play. What he thought was this. Wedmore had been murdered, and his body concealed. If this was not so, why had the body not been discovered? Three weeks had passed, and the dalesmen, who knew every track and stone on the mountain, had searched and searched in vain. It is true that, during the whole of that time, there had not been a single clear day. But still my friend's suspicions would not be allayed, and he pointedly asked some of the men if they thought it possible that, assuming young Wedmore had fallen over a precipice, his body could have lain so long without being found? To this they replied certainly, and they said that there was no mountain in the Lake country that was so calculated to hold a dead body as Helvellyn, and they instanced the case of poor Mr. Gough, whose fate is so pathetically sung by Sir Walter Scott in the poem commencing—

"I climbed the dark brow of the mighty Helvellyn."

Gough's body lay at the foot of a precipice for months guarded by his faithful dog, which

"Chased the hill fox and the raven away."

In the face of this fact and the assertion of the men my friend's suspicions were to some extent allayed, though he could not shake them off altogether.

Although three weeks had passed the excitement had by no means died down, and the fate of the missing tourist was a constant theme of conversation throughout the dales, and men were willing to risk their lives in the hope of gaining the fifty pounds reward, which to those poor people was a large sum. But all efforts were fruitless; no trace of young Wedmore could be got. At length, a week later, the weather suddenly cleared up, and for the first time since the young man's disappearance there was a clear atmosphere and a blue sky. This brought together a large number of people, who, organising themselves into parties under the superintendence of my friend, spread themselves out on the mountain, resolving to search it on all sides from summit to base. It was, therefore, looked upon as certain that, if the body was lying there at all, it would be discovered. Unfortunately, soon after midday, the clouds gathered again, and the searchers returned without success. Naturally my friend was greatly disappointed, for he had come to the conclusion that there was not a doubt but what Wedmore was dead, because his friends declared that he was of a most cheerful disposition. He wanted for nothing in the way of money, for, though his own earnings were not very great, his friends were fairly well off, and both his father and an aunt made him a liberal allowance. Moreover, he was engaged to be married to a charming young lady, who had a fortune of a little over two

hundred a year. He had had no quarrel with any one, he owed nobody any money, and his character was unassailable. Therefore there was absolutely not the flimsiest pretence for suggesting that he might purposely be keeping out of the way for some reason. Of course, sometimes men are suddenly seized with an aberration of intellect, which induces them, under imaginary fears of danger or something else, to wander from their home or friends. But had that been Wedmore's case he must have been discovered, for the hue and cry had gone all over the country. In view of all the circumstances, the mystery of disappearance was capable of only one solution, and that was that he was dead.

A day or two later there came another brief spell of fine weather, and my friend and half a dozen men were early on the mountain. For a long time they searched in vain, until suddenly, on passing over the edge of some steep rocks, a sudden puff of wind blew a sickening odour into their nostrils. One of the men, while held by his fellows, leaned over the precipice as far as possible, and then he shouted that on a slope below he believed he saw the body. Other men looked over and said the same thing, and then, labouring under intense but suppressed excitement, the little band hurried down. To reach the slope they had to make a long detour, which involved nearly two hours' work, and at last, when they got to the foot of the precipice and reached the slope, all doubt was set at rest by discovering the terribly decomposed body of Alfred Wedmore. He was lying doubled up, partly on his side, his hands under him, and his face turned down. Search was made to see if there was another body about, but no other was discovered.

Wedmore was not disturbed, but messengers were despatched with all speed for old Mr. Wedmore—his other son had been obliged to return to his business—and for a local doctor. The old gentleman was too much upset by the news to go, but the doctor set off immediately, and on the arrival at the spot he at once proceeded to examine the body. Decomposition had very far advanced, but this fact was proved beyond all doubt, not a bone in the body was broken, as would surely have been the case if the unfortunate young man had fallen over the precipice. How then did he meet his death? A more minute examination revealed this. There was a bullet wound in the chest in the region of the heart, and there were corresponding holes in the clothes. He had died from a bullet, but who had fired it? His own hand, or somebody else's?

The remains were carefully and tenderly carried down into the valley, where a *post-mortem* examination was made, and it was then found that the apex of the heart had been pierced by a pistol bullet which had been lodged in the back near the spine, from whence it was extracted.

His friends scouted the idea of suicide, and said they were certain he had never possessed a pistol in his life. If he had shot himself the pistol must have been somewhere near where he was lying, even assuming that he had shot himself on the edge of the precipice, which he would have had to have done in order to roll where he was discovered. But with a view to set this point at rest, Mr. Wedmore said that if any man could discover a pistol on the mountain, and give reasonable proof that he had so discovered it, and if it fitted the bullet taken from the dead man's body, he would present

the finder with two hundred pounds. But no pistol was ever found, and the dalesmen were too honest to attempt any deception. It might, therefore, be supposed that the ill-starred young fellow had been murdered for the sake of robbery, but this was negatived by a ring of some value being on his finger, a gold pin in his scarf, and in a purse in one pocket there were a five-pound note and four pounds in gold, while in the other pocket were eight and sixpence in silver and some coppers. Clearly, then, robbery had not been the motive, and the doctors declared that, had he fallen over the precipice on to the stony slope where he was found, nearly every bone in his body would have been broken. Therefore he did not fall over. Nor could he have walked up the slope to the spot after he was shot, because, the bullet having gone through the heart, death must have been instantaneous, and had he shot himself there the pistol must have been found, close to the body. He could not possibly have cast it from him. There was only one theory, therefore, to fall back upon. He had been murdered—not for the purpose of robbery, as it seemed—and having been shot his body had been dragged to where it was found. Why? Surely not to lead to the belief that he had fallen over the precipice, because the bullet wound and no bones being broken negatived that. Now, to place his body in the position it was must have been a work of very great difficulty, for the slope on which it was found was loose, rubbly stone, and he must have been literally carried up for a considerable distance, and the task was one that only an exceedingly powerful man could have accomplished. Then again it was out of all tracks to the summit of the mountain, and no one having the least regard for

his safety would have ventured there; for the top of the slope was the foot of a mural precipice, and to the right and left the slope shelved away so rapidly as to make any attempt to pass that way next to impossible. As a matter of fact, the slope represented a triangle, the apex lying at the foot of the precipice, and it was in the apex that the body was discovered. Who placed it there? If young Wedmore was murdered, and there is little doubt he was, who murdered him, and why? Obviously the object was not robbery, because nothing was taken from him. Every possible attempt was made to discover the man who had the appearance of a sailor, and who had been seen by the old woman talking to Wedmore, but without avail. The questions I have asked have never been answered, and the mystery of Wedmore's death has never been solved, and probably never will be till the secrets of all hearts shall be known.

A BIG JOB.

IN a dingy little street off Cannon Street, London, a burglary was committed some years ago which may rank as one of the biggest things done by cracksmen during the present century. In this street was situated the warehouse of Messrs. Kegan, Widdicomb, & Miller, who did an enormous shipping trade, principally in silk, velvets, lace shawls, and tailoring cloth. The firm was an old-established one, and though its premises—long since swept away by the improvements that have taken place in this part of London—were tumble-down and dingy, the business was most extensive. Its chief connections were with India, China, and the Colonies, and enormous bales of goods were sent off daily. With the exception of one Saturday a month, the warehouse was always closed at two o'clock on Saturday, but on the exception packers were kept at work till sometimes eight and nine at night, preparing bales of goods to go off the first thing on Monday morning, this particular Monday always being a special shipping day. The goods were packed in waterproof bales, which were pressed by hydraulic machinery, and then sown in canvas, and made secure with bands of iron. When the men left off on what I may call these packing Saturdays there were generally between two and three dozen of these

huge bales, representing many thousands of pounds in value, ready for the carriers to cart away when business recommenced on the Monday.

The system had been pursued for years without a hitch, and not a member of the firm, nor probably one of the two hundred and odd employés, ever thought it likely that the ponderous heavy bales of goods would be stolen. The modern cracksman, however, is an enterprising fellow, and he works on a very different system now to that pursued by his forefathers. In spite of telegraphs and railways he has grown bolder, and occasionally startles the world by the gigantic nature of his operations. In fact, if railways and telegraphs militate against the free exercise of his profession in some respects, they are of signal advantage to him in others, for his pals can warn him by telegraph, and by means of the railway he can cover long distances in a few hours. He has also reduced burglary to a science, and in putting his plans into execution he follows out fixed rules, and has a well-defined scheme in his mind, for he knows that not only has he all the modern and improved appliances for preventing burglary against him, but he is opposed by a well-nigh perfect police system, as well as by the telegraph and the press, which disseminates news with incredible rapidity. Under these altered conditions of things Mr. William Sykes must carry on his profession on very different lines to what his great-grandfather did when the streets were lighted with oil lamps, and only very sparsely with those; when locks were poor, and the night watch or patrol, in the shape of a doddering old man, snored in his box, oblivious of what was going on under his very nose. It is true that in those good old times gentle-

men of Mr. Sykes' stamp ran the risk of being brought into contact with Jack Ketch, and of dangling at the end of a rope some morning as the church clocks tolled eight. But for one who was thus ignominiously treated a score escaped, while very frequently the worst that befell those that were captured was transportation to the Australian Colonies, where there was always the chance of becoming bank directors, governors, magistrates, and, of course, millionaires. The times have changed, however, and if there are fewer burglars of the type that *Punch* was once so fond of depicting, namely, the low-browed, small-eyed, broken-nosed individual, dressed in a fur cap, a big red scarf wound round his bull-like neck; a monkey jacket, from one of the pockets of which protrudes a bludgeon; corduroy trousers, and massive hob-nailed boots, it is certain that the apparently refined and suave type has increased. Formerly their brute strength was the, or at any rate one of the, indispensable qualities necessary for success in the profession, but now-a-days brains are indispensable, and the case in point fully bears this out.

One Monday morning in November, when the chief porter in Messrs. Kegan, Widdicomb, & Miller's employ, whose duty it was to open the warehouse, entered the premises, he was both surprised and startled to find that between then and the time of locking up on the Saturday night somebody had been there before him. There was ample evidence of this; and as the porter was well aware that no one had any legitimate business to enter the premises between the Saturday and the Monday, save the proprietors themselves, he lost no time in raising an alarm, and very soon a policeman was on the premises. Then, to the horror of the

porter, and of course the surprise of the policeman, it was found that the whole of the great bales that had been packed on the Saturday ready for shipment had disappeared. Not a moment was lost in sending word to the residence of each member of the firm. Mr. Kegan was abroad in ill health, but his partners were speedily on the spot, and an investigation took place. Then was revealed the fact that a robbery of so extensive a nature had taken place as to fairly place it in the category of the biggest of jobs.

It is necessary to state that one side of the warehouse opened into a narrow court, which was the property of the firm. The back of another building blocked up the end of the court, and the entrance could be closed by iron wicket gates that were fastened with a padlock. It was into this court that the carrier's lorries were backed to be loaded with the bales, which were swung out of the warehouse by means of hydraulic cranes. Now the investigation revealed the astounding fact that some time between Saturday night and Monday morning certain members of 'the society for appropriating other men's goods' had, by means of horse and lorry, cleared out every bale that had been packed, representing a net money value amounting to close on thirty thousand pounds. In addition, a safe had been dexterously opened, and petty cash amounting to one hundred and ninety-five pounds had been abstracted. It was perfectly obvious to the meanest intelligence that the enterprising artists who had done the work had opened the iron gates, backed in the lorry, and then in the usual way, by means of the cranes, swung out the goods.

Information of this 'big job' was at once forwarded to Scotland Yard, and I was sent down post haste to

make an investigation. For two or three days the Metropolis had been enshrouded in a genuine November fog, as thick and yellow as pea-soup, and as dripping and chilly as a blanket dipped in ice-cold water. This atmospheric condition was distinctly favourable to the cracksmen in their arduous task, for, as every one knows, the city streets of the British Metropolis are as dreary and desolate on a wet and foggy Sunday as the heart of the great Sahara.

The robbery was certainly one of a very daring and audacious nature, and it was patent that several men had been engaged in it, and what was no less patent was that they must have had an intimate knowledge of the premises, and of the firm's mode of business. An element of mystery was imparted to the affair by the policemen who had been on duty during the intervening hours, and whose beat would embrace the street in which the warehouse was situated, affirming positively that they had noticed nothing unusual. But another man, whose beat was in the neighbourhood of the Mansion House, came forward and stated that on Sunday morning, between six and seven o'clock, he was somewhat astonished to see a lorry laden with bales, and drawn by two powerful horses, go by and disappear in the fog in the direction of Cornhill. The fog was so thick at the time that he did not observe the lorry until abreast of him, and though it was not going fast it had come into sight and was gone again within a space of a minute, owing to the opaqueness of the atmosphere.

Although it occurred to this constable that it was somewhat unusual for a lorry laden with bales to be going through the streets on a Sunday morning, he did not attach any importance to the matter, and

least of all did he think that a gigantic robbery had been committed. Nor was the man to be blamed, for in a great city like London some exigencies of business might have made it necessary to convey a waggon-load of goods from one point to another even on a Sunday morning. The fellow who drove the horses was described, so far as any description could be given of him, as being dressed exactly like a carter, but there was nothing peculiar or striking about him. In fact, as the policeman honestly confessed, he would not be able to identify the man again if he saw him. As luck would have it this clue, which, meagre as it was, was not without a certain importance, did not represent the only one, for there had been picked up on the floor of the packing-room in the warehouse an envelope containing a letter. The envelope was addressed thus:

MR. WILLIAM JACKSON,
Old Ship Coffee House,
High Street,
Poplar,
London. E.

[It bore the Manchester post mark, and the following was the letter which was written on a sheet of very common note-paper, and was without either date or address; and though every word was spelt correctly, the handwriting was scrawly and poor:]—

‘Dear Old Pal,—I’m on with you, and game for anything in these blooming hard-up times. I will be in the village at the time you mention, and we will lick the scheme into shape over a bottle of the sparkling. Give my how-do-you-does to the missus. Ta-ta till we meet.
‘JOE.’

No one in the employ of the firm knew the hand-

writing, and no one there was named William Jackson, and so it was pretty evident that Mr. William Jackson had, without legitimate object or purpose, been on the premises, and had inadvertently dropped the letter from his pocket. The importance of that letter I fully recognised, and my first step was to go eastward, having first attired myself in a costume that might have enabled me to pass for a carter, a porter, a loafer, or an ex-convict, according to the particular class of society I happened to find myself in. I betook myself to the 'Old Ship Coffee-house,' High Street, Poplar. It was one of the class of houses peculiar to the East-end of London, and being situated close to the East India Docks it had a large clientèle amongst the dock labourers, though, apart from this distinct class, it had a very miscellaneous set of customers, whose respective callings it would have been very difficult to determine. There were tramps and trolls, loafers and outcasts. The people who kept the house had been there for fifteen years, and were accounted very respectable, as such people go. The man was a little given to drink, and when in his cups occasionally quarrelled with his 'missus,' but that, so far as was known, was the worst charge that could be brought against him. Having sat for some time over a cup of coffee and a plate of bread and butter, I struck up an acquaintance with the landlord, a somewhat sullen sort of man with the stamp of alcohol in his face, and yet withal fairly shrewd and intelligent.

'Do I know William Jackson?' he said, in answer to a question I put to him. 'Well, I only know him by his having come here occasionally, and I've taken in letters for him. He seemed to be one of a little clique who called him the lawyer. What his trade is

I don't know. I should say he was one of those fellows that pick up a living anyhow.'

Further questions, delicately put, elicited from the landlord that Jackson, otherwise 'The Lawyer,' had only begun to use the coffee-house about a month before this; that nothing had been seen of him for several days, and that in personal appearance he was short and stout, with a florid face, a slightly bald head, had two of his front teeth missing, and a cast in his eye; that he dressed in a shabby-genteel way, and wore spectacles. He had been a fairly good customer, and always paid immediately for whatever he had, and he was very liberal in treating his associates.

Armed with this knowledge I came to the conclusion that Mr. Jackson was a very dangerous character; was a professional burglar, and had concocted the robbery which I was then investigating in the 'Old Ship Coffee-house.'

To the uninitiated it may appear to be an easy thing to trace a waggon load of big bales. In a small town it would be undoubtedly, but in such a huge place as London, with its teeming population and its ceaseless business, it is by no means easy, and several days passed without my getting the faintest clue to the whereabouts of the goods. I did not think they could be taken out of the country, or even removed from London, at any rate not in bulk, because every railway, every shipping agency, every legitimate channel of conveyance in fact, had been notified of the robbery, and the bales and marks had been minutely described.

My energies were mainly directed now to effecting a meeting with Mr. William Jackson, *alias* the lawyer, feeling sure that if I could only discover him I should

not be far off the goods. It was clear, of course, that several men must have been concerned in the robbery; but it seemed to me no less clear that Jackson had played a leading part, for he had evidently written to his pal 'Joe' in Manchester suggesting business, and pal 'Joe' had expressed his readiness to go in for anything. Jackson had not been as careful as he ought to have been, or he would have destroyed that letter; but not having done so he was fated to leave it behind in the warehouse of Kegan, Widdicomb, & Miller after his night's work, and thus place in my hands a very valuable clue. A little cogitation on my part led me to the conclusion that the surest way of making Mr. Jackson's acquaintance was by laying a trap for him, and knowing the ways and weakness of criminals as I did, I felt that trapping this man would be a little less difficult than catching wild birds by putting salt on their tails. I argued with myself that Mr. Jackson was, in all probability, a resident in the East of London, or at any rate that he had friends and associates in that quarter, and as the criminal classes are much interested in the doings of their kind, they eagerly read the papers for news. Therefore, anything personal to Mr. Jackson, supposing it escaped his own eye, would be brought under his notice by some of his associates, for there is a remarkable freemasonry among thieves, and they can communicate with each other by ways and means unknown to ordinary folk.

As is well known, there is a weekly paper published in London which has an enormous circulation amongst the criminal classes, as it makes a feature of giving the police news very fully. In this paper I caused the following advertisement to appear in a prominent position:

WILLIAM JACKSON *alias* THE LAWYER, a Very Important Communication is Waiting for You at the OLD SHIP. Get it at once. It is greatly to your Interest.

Believing that this might fetch Mr. Jackson, I took good care to have a communication in the shape of a letter as follows :

‘I have heard from one of your pals that you are in good feather. If you have any rumbo swag to fence, make a plant by advertisement in ——— paper. I give best prices in market, and ship immediately. Act on the square is the sign.’

This letter was written as if it came from a ‘fence’ who wanted to do business, and ‘act on the square’ meant that Jackson, if he should advertise, was to use that as the heading for his advertisement; while ‘make a plant’ was to fix a place of meeting.

Of course the landlord of the coffee-house had to be taken into the secret, and in the event of any one applying, or Jackson himself calling, after the appearance of the advertisement, he was to be sure and find out where he went to if I should not happen to be there. As a matter of fact, however, I determined never to lose sight of the coffee-house for several days after the publication of the advertisement. Three days passed without any result, but in the course of the afternoon of the fourth day a small boy, about twelve years of age, with an old-looking face, and a preternaturally sharp expression, and eyes that were singularly suggestive of inborn cunning, entered the coffee-house and called for ‘a pint of coffee and two slices,’ which order was duly executed. He glanced round the room, but the hour being one when there was no

business except such as might arise from chance customers dropping in, he only saw a man who might have been taken for a hard-up tramp out of luck, seated in one corner dozing, while a paper he had been reading had fallen from his hand and was lying on the floor.

The boy finished his coffee and bread and butter, then he rose, and glancing furtively at the dozing man, he approached the door of the little private room where the landlord or some member of his family was usually in attendance. On this particular occasion the landlord himself was there, and the boy, putting his head in at the doorway, said—

‘I say, governor, have you got any letters for Mister Jackson?’

‘Yes, I’ve got one,’ answered the landlord, and he handed the urchin that trap letter. The youngster took it eagerly, and thrust it into the inner recesses of his waistcoat and went hurriedly out. Then the dozing man, in the person of myself, rose and followed him. It was a wretched afternoon, almost dark, with a greasy, sleety rain falling. I had some difficulty in keeping the youngster in sight, for he hurried along very rapidly. However, I managed to do so, and saw him stop at last at the corner of a street where he was joined by a man I instantly recognised as Jackson, from the description I had of him from the landlord of the coffee-house. I saw the boy hand the fellow the letter, and my feelings of elation at the success of my little plan may be better imagined than described. Jackson did not open the letter then, but put it into his pocket. And he and the boy walked about fifty yards to a cabstand and took a cab. I allowed them to drive off, then I jumped into another cab and told my man that, if

he wished to earn a treble fare, he was not to lose sight of the first cab. Nor did he, and cab No. 1 went as far as Whitechapel Church, in the Whitechapel Road, and then Jackson and the boy alighted, and, paying the fare, dismissed the cab. I also alighted, feeling sure that I had now almost tracked my man to his lair. All unconscious as he was of being shadowed, he and his companion went into a public-house adjoining the Effingham Theatre, and a minute later I entered by another door, and, as I expected would be the case, Jackson was scrutinising the letter. He had not read it in the cab, owing, no doubt, to the want of light, for he was nearsighted, and, in spite of his spectacles, he had to put the paper very close to his eyes in order to see.

Having finished the perusal of the letter he put it into his breast pocket, drank up the hot rum and water he had ordered, while the boy discussed some mulled ale. Then they went out and I after them. I had to keep very close now in order not to lose sight of them, for it was quite dark, and that and the crowds of people made it by no means easy. From Whitechapel they went towards Spitalfields, and turned down one of the most notorious streets in that insalubrious neighbourhood, and I tracked them to a house into which they disappeared. For two hours I waited there, and as they did not come forth again I concluded that it was Jackson's place of residence. But I had no intention of letting him slip now that he was unconsciously drifting into my net, and getting hold of a policeman on the beat I told him to keep an eye on the house until I got a colleague to keep watch and ward with me. The constable told me he knew Jackson by sight, and that the house in which he lived was considered one of the quietest and best conducted

in the street. I found out the next day that the house was in the occupation of several lodgers, and that Jackson, who was known here by the name of Morton, occupied the middle floor with his son, the lad I had seen, and his wife, or the woman who occupied that position. Nothing was known of him, as he had only been living there for a month.

The following morning Jackson came out alone, and my colleague, who was on watch, shadowed him, and saw him meet four other men at the corner of a street leading into the Whitechapel Road. They stood talking for a few minutes, and then proceeded to some premises in the road, consisting of a house and shop, the house being empty and the shop closed. They let themselves in with a key they possessed, and then my colleague hurried off to me to tell me the news. I at once smelt a rat, and felt sure that the stolen goods would be found in this shop. I lost no time in having an interview with the landlord of the premises, and he informed me that a Mr. Morton had taken a lease of the premises three weeks before with the intention of opening the shop as a grocery store. He had given very good references, and had paid a half year's rent in advance. My net was tightening, and I hoped now to make a big haul within a few hours.

That evening, in company with my colleague and two constables, I entered that shop by means of skeleton keys, and what a sight we beheld. Here were some of the bales not yet unpacked. But others had been unpacked, and the goods were lying about in heaps, while portions had been made up in parcels ready to be taken away as opportunity afforded. While we were still on the premises we heard a key grate in the lock, and men's voices speaking in low tones.

Hastily darkening our lanterns we concealed ourselves, and had the satisfaction of knowing that Mr. Jackson or Morton had entered in company with three other men, their object being to remove some of the goods. We allowed them to get a light, and then with a swoop we were down upon them. They were so utterly taken off their guard that we had very little trouble, and we had them handcuffed before they could offer any effective resistance or had recovered from their surprise. Seldom indeed had a party of clever rogues been so suddenly and neatly trapped, and they were so utterly unprepared for it that they seemed stupefied. Leaving one of our men in charge of the premises, we put our captives in two four-wheeled cabs, and the whole business was done so quietly that the attention of the passers-by was not even attracted, and nobody in the neighbourhood knew that the perpetrators of the biggest job on record in the way of burglaries had been run to earth until they read it in the papers the following day.

We found that Jackson was an old convict, his real name being Thomas Braithwaite. He had originally been a lawyer's clerk, but had suffered five years' penal servitude for embezzlement and fraud. His knowledge of the law had led to his being known as the 'lawyer' in the fraternity. The evidence that we collected against him left little doubt that the plan of the robbery of Kegan, Widdicomb, & Miller's warehouse had been conceived and planned by him in conjunction with a man named Thorpe, who had for some time been in the employ of Kegan, Widdicomb, & Miller as a packer, but had been dismissed for drunkenness. As Thorpe knew the working of the business he had been invaluable to the syndicate of

rascals. The Manchester 'Joe' was also an old lag, who had done terms of two and five years respectively. His name was Jake Conway, but he was known to his associates as 'Joe the Pedlar,' as by assuming the character of a pedlar he got access to private houses, from which he sometimes obtained very good hauls. In addition to these fellows there were three other men, though they had not previously been convicted of any offence. But nevertheless they bore the reputation of being idle, worthless fellows, who would not work if they could help it. One was a blacksmith by trade, the other a joiner, while the third had been a carter, and it was he who drove the lorry. This lorry and the two horses had been bought specially for the occasion by this company of burglars, so what with the working plant, and the payment of the half-year's rent for the premises in Whitechapel, they started business with capital. But as soon as the job was completed the lorry and horses were sold again, and the wretches actually made a profit of ten pounds on the transaction. Braithwaite had been living in Belfast for some time, having gone there after being engaged in a burglary at a gentleman's house in the neighbourhood of Hampstead Heath, and for which he was not even suspected. Finding Belfast too dull for him, he had returned to London, and, with his wife and son, took lodgings in Poplar, and that was how he became a customer of the Old Ship Coffee-house. His son was by a first wife, and his second wife, to whom he had only been married a year, was a very respectable woman. She had been a cook in a hotel, and had managed to save nearly three hundred pounds, which was one of the inducements for Braithwaite to marry her. She knew nothing of his rascality, and fearing,

no doubt, that she might see his correspondence, he had his letters addressed to the coffee-house. There is little doubt, however, that the son was in his father's secrets, and was being trained up to roguery. Nothing could be proved against the boy, or he would have been put into a reformatory, and I never knew what became of him, but I have no doubt he went to the bad, for he had 'rascality' written in his face.

Braithwaite, in view of his previous conviction, was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude, and the others got proportionate terms. The money was not recovered, but nearly all the goods were, although, as can be well understood, the firm suffered a considerable loss, and their business was much disorganised for the time. But they were very gratified that matters were no worse than they were; and in recognition of my services in the case, they were good enough to present me with a very handsome silver cup, bearing a suitable inscription, and which I treasure amongst my most precious heirlooms.

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